

# More Than Atonement: The Event of the Cross in the Theology of Karl Barth

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**Signed Declaration**

I, Heather Paige McDivitt, hereby declare that I have written this thesis and that the work it contains is entirely my own. I furthermore declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other ~~de~~gree or professional qualification.

Signed

Date



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## **Abbreviations**

- I/1 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I, part 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)  
I/2 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I, part 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956)  
II/1 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II, part 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957)  
II/2 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II, part 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957)  
III/1 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III, part 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958)  
III/2 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III, part 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960)  
III/3 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III, part 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961)  
III/4 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III, part 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961)  
IV/1 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956)  
IV/2 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958)  
IV/3 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 3: first half (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961)  
and vol. IV, part 3: second half (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962)  
IV/4 *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969)

*TCL The Christian Life. Church Dogmatics, Volume IV, Part 4 Lecture  
Fragments* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981)

All Biblical quotes from New Revised Standard Version (Oxford: Oxford  
University Press, 1998)

## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the way in which the event of the cross, discussed throughout Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, performs a significant role in several doctrines including the doctrines of revelation, God, election, and reconciliation, and is an essential aspect of Barth's writings concerning Christology, pneumatology, and ethics. This thesis will focus particular attention on the short section of the *Church Dogmatics* volume IV – paragraph 59.2 “The Judge judged in our place” – in which Barth concentrates on the event of the cross. In this thesis Barth's interpretation and use of the event of the cross will be compared to the thoughts of other theologians including Martin Luther and Jürgen Moltmann. The interpretation of those who misread Barth's doctrine of reconciliation will be analysed and responses to these errors will be formulated from the *Church Dogmatics*.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

From the very beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* there is evidence that Karl Barth intended to articulate a staurocentric theology:

Dogmatics is possible only as *theologia crucis*, in the act of obedience which is certain in faith, but which for this very reason is humble, always being thrown back to the beginning and having to make a fresh start. It is not possible as an effortless triumph or an intermittent labour. It always takes place on the narrow way which leads from the enacted revelation to the promised revelation.<sup>1</sup>

For Barth the *theologia crucis* makes dogmatics possible because it articulates the event of the death of Jesus Christ which is the starting point for human knowledge of God, the church's proclamation of reconciliation, and the beginning of all human actions of obedient response to the love of God. This thesis will examine the content and scope of the event of the cross in Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

Why is this detailed analysis of the event of the cross warranted? A careful study of the event of the cross in the writings of Barth reveals that this event has significant implications for several major doctrines. In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV Barth argues:

All theology, both that which follows and indeed that which precedes the doctrine of reconciliation, depends upon this *theologia crucis* ... Everything depends upon the fact that the Lord who became servant, the Son of God who went into the far country, and came to us, was and did all this for us; that He fulfilled, and fulfilled in this way, the divine judgement laid upon Him.<sup>2</sup>

The event of the cross in the theology of Barth is more than a theory of atonement: for Barth the cross is the event that reveals the triune God to humanity, reconciles God and humanity, and elicits response and provides the basis for ethical living. Barth refers to the event of the cross in each of his major doctrines, including the doctrine of God, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of creation, and the doctrine of reconciliation. Joseph Mangina states that for Barth, "The doctrine of reconciliation is more than just a theology of the cross, although the cross remains utterly central. The event it deals with embraces incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection; the Spirit, the church, and Christian ethics; the individual life of faith, love, and hope."<sup>3</sup> This thesis argues that Barth's use of the cross is valuable

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<sup>1</sup> I/1, 14.

<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 273.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 115.

to the Christian community today because of its Christological emphasis on the identity of the eternally electing and self-revealing God, because it articulates the reconciliation between God and humanity, and because it provides instruction for obedient human response.

Barth draws upon the event of the cross most significantly in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV in the discussion of the reconciliation of God and humanity through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is here that Barth's understanding of the redemptive significance of the cross is most clearly articulated and this material (specifically paragraph 59) will be the primary focus for this thesis. This introductory chapter will clarify the views of those who misread Barth's interpretation of the cross, analyse Martin Luther's writings on the cross and his influence on Barth, and finally explore Jesus' cry of abandonment from the cross.

As described by traditional Christian theology the salvation of humanity is grounded upon the event of the cross and the event of the resurrection. Throughout history various theologians place priority on one event or the other and articulate these events with varying emphasis and detail. A difficulty arises when one event is emphasized to the extent that the other is relegated to a minor role or is overshadowed completely. Luther's articulation of the event of the cross in the 1518 Heidelberg Disputation is considered the classic text for describing the theology of the cross. Even with the continuing influence of Luther, the Christian community struggles to balance the proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Today some argue that there is a tendency to overemphasize the resurrection of Jesus Christ or treat Jesus Christ solely as a moral example (and downplay the event of the cross) due to the criticisms of the traditional theories of atonement (including the *Christus Victor*, satisfaction, and moral influence theories) from various theological positions.<sup>4</sup> This thesis argues that Barth's articulation of the doctrine of reconciliation provides valuable insights that describe the significance of both the event of the cross and the resurrection for Christian theology. Barth's writings about the event of the cross in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV are based on his understanding of the eternal divine election and God's self-revelation in freedom and in love (as

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<sup>4</sup> See further Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003) and Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

articulated in earlier volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*), which provides for the restoration of the covenant and human participation in the covenant.

Christian theology must clearly expound the event of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross to enable men and women to understand the Christian faith and the identity of God. Barth's doctrine of reconciliation examines topics including the judgement of God, the sin of humanity, the violence of the cross and the obedience of Jesus Christ, and explores how the events of Good Friday relate to the events of Easter Sunday. Eberhard Busch explains the importance of the cross for Barth:

When God speaks at Easter, he graciously awakens the human who can hear him. Moreover, the word that God speaks is not a neutral word. It is the 'word of the cross.'<sup>5</sup>

The proclamation of the Christian community strays from the gospel message if it fails to articulate the message of the cross or alters it so much that the event of the cross becomes unrecognisable and disappears from the witness of preaching.

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV articulates the restoration of the covenant of grace through the obedient life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Barth stresses the obedience of Jesus Christ and his action with humanity, for humanity and in the place of humanity ("God with us") as the foundation of the reconciling activity that restores humanity to fellowship with God. This chapter will explore how Barth has been misread, examine Luther's influence on Barth, and discuss Barth's use of Jesus Christ's cry of abandonment on the cross. The second chapter of this thesis will explore Barth's articulation of human sin and disobedience and the need for the cross. Then the thesis will analyse Barth's doctrine of reconciliation and his description of the Judge who became the judged and reconciled the world to God. In a four-part exposition in paragraph 59 of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth describes how "the Son of God fulfilled the righteous judgement on us men by Himself taking our place as man and in our place undergoing the judgement under which we had passed."<sup>6</sup> Barth states that first, "Jesus Christ was and is 'for us' in that He took our place as Judge."<sup>7</sup> The role and identity of the Judge will be analysed in chapter three of this thesis. Second, Barth states that "Jesus Christ was and is for us in that

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<sup>5</sup> Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 65.

<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 222.

<sup>7</sup> IV/1, 231.



He took the place of us as sinners.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ’s act of bearing the sins of humanity will be analysed by investigating Barth’s writings on Christology in chapter four. Third, Barth states that “Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He suffered and was crucified and died.”<sup>9</sup> The work of Jesus Christ in the reconciliation of God and humanity will be explored in chapter five of this thesis by comparing Barth’s exposition of the atonement as found in volume II/1 with volume IV/1. Finally, Barth writes, “Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He has done this before God and has therefore done right.”<sup>10</sup> The righteousness of Christ will be explored in chapter six by examining Barth’s writings about the obedience of Jesus Christ and how he acted “for us” and “in our place” in his death upon the cross. Chapter seven will explore the role of the human agent and the possibility of human response in light of the event of the cross. The final chapter of this thesis will explain the continuing significance of Barth’s writing on the cross and doctrine of reconciliation.

The event of the cross has radical implications for the salvation of humanity and the relationship of humanity with God. Barth understands the significant role of the cross for theology in the earliest volume of the *Church Dogmatics* as evidenced in the above quote from the very beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* volume I/1. However, some have argued that Barth did not stress the event of the cross enough, and now we shall examine how he has been misread.

#### A. Misreading Barth’s articulation of the cross

In *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, G. C. Berkouwer labels Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation as “triumph theology” and, as a result, this characterisation of Barth’s theology does not adequately describe Barth’s significant writings concerning the cross. Berkouwer argues that “Barth’s theology must *from its inception* be characterized as triumph theology which aims to testify to the overcoming power of grace.”<sup>11</sup> Berkouwer fails to recognise

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<sup>8</sup> IV/1, 235.

<sup>9</sup> IV/1, 244.

<sup>10</sup> IV/1, 256.

<sup>11</sup> G.C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (London: Paternoster Press, 1956), 37. Earlier he states, “Barth wishes to emphasize above all the triumph of God’s grace ... In one way or another all the discussion centering around Barth is related to this emphasis on the triumph of grace,” 19. One wonders if Berkouwer’s assessment might have been different had he written his book after reading all parts of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV. Berkouwer had access to parts one and two at the time he wrote his book. These two parts contain significant discussion concerning the event of the cross and should have been sufficient



sufficiently the dialectic present in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV as Barth explains the seriousness of God's "No" to humanity in the death of Jesus Christ and God's "Yes" to humanity in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Berkouwer's assessment of Barth places too much emphasis on the events of Easter Sunday and fails to acknowledge Barth's continuing stress of the event of the cross. This error leads Berkouwer to miss the significance of Barth's use of the cross throughout the *Church Dogmatics* to the point of not understanding the impact the cross has on Barth's entire theology. Berkouwer cautions, "When dialectical theology itself so emphatically rejects every 'theology of glory,' it is the more necessary to examine the 'triumph' which Barth himself sets forth."<sup>12</sup> Berkouwer fails to appreciate the dialectic of the divine "No" and "Yes" evident in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation. He argues:

Over against the specter of the 'theology of glory,' they [dialectical theologians] pleaded for a *broken* theology of the cross. They desired to construct a theology which would set its imprint on *every* pronouncement of theology and which would call men back from finding to seeking, from having to praying, and from triumph to 'honorable and complete spiritual poverty.'<sup>13</sup>

Berkouwer fails to describe what *broken* theology of the cross is and misreads Barth's Christocentric emphasis in the doctrine of reconciliation.

How does Barth conceive of the difference between the triumph of grace in his own theology and the 'theology of glory' which he so strongly opposes? It is not difficult to answer this question. *This* triumph of grace is possible only in terms of the cross and in *contrast* to the 'speculatio Majestatis.' It is a Christo-centric triumph, it is a 'theology from below.'<sup>14</sup>

Although Berkouwer is correct that Barth's opposes a purely triumphal understanding of faith (similar to Luther's protest against a 'theology of glory'), he misreads Barth in crucial places. This thesis will demonstrate that Barth's Christocentric focus throughout the doctrine of reconciliation rejects any theology that solely focuses on the triumph as stated in a "theology of glory" because Barth articulates reconciliation based on the event of the cross. Berkouwer is mistaken to label Barth's theology as solely a "theology from below" as it fails to recognise the importance of the dialectic of veiling and unveiling of God's self-revelation that is evident in the doctrine of reconciliation. The fact that Berkouwer does not read Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in light of his doctrine of election leads to

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for a balanced understanding of the role of the cross and resurrection by Berkouwer. Although Berkouwer discusses Barth's writings concerning the judgement of Christ upon the cross in his discussion in chapter 11 titled *The Divine Triumph*, he still overemphasizes the triumph motif.

<sup>12</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 201.

<sup>13</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 202, quoting Barth in the German edition of *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* I/1, 186.

<sup>14</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 203.

him misunderstanding Barth's Christology and doctrine of reconciliation. Barth's two-fold emphasis on the way of the Son of God into the far country and the return of the Son of Man clearly illustrate Barth's recognition that theology is made possible only through the divine action and self-revelation of God. Barth defends his doctrine of reconciliation in light of Berkouwer's misunderstandings:

To say 'Jesus' is necessarily to say 'history,' His history, the history in which He is what He is and does what He does. In His history we know God, and we know evil and their relationship the one to the other – but only from this source and in this way. But at this point a way is trodden. A question raised and answered. A sentence is pronounced and judgment is executed and suffered. A faith and obedience are demanded and displayed. Prayer is offered. A cross is borne, and on this cross suffering is endured. From the deepest depths a cry is raised to heaven. Nothing is self-evident, obvious or matter-of-course ... how can we ever imagine that this is an easy 'triumph of grace'?<sup>15</sup>

The event of the cross provides the dramatic "No" of God that prevents an easy triumph of grace.

A more recent critic, John Reist also argues that Barth fails to note sufficiently the role of the cross in the doctrine of reconciliation. Reist questions:

does Barth include all of Jesus' ministry under the concept of resurrection, in which case Christ's resurrection becomes the benediction of the Father and the eschatological validation of the Son's entire ministry as the effectual commencement of the ushering in of the kingdom? Even if Barth's view does include the cross under the resurrection, certainly he has omitted from the Christian life in hope a central concern and example – that of the cross.<sup>16</sup>

This thesis argues that Barth does not omit the cross from the doctrine of reconciliation by dissolving the event of the cross into the resurrection. Reist's concern is addressed in the discussion in chapter five concerning how Jesus Christ acts for us, and in chapter seven where human participation and ethics are discussed in light of Barth's writings concerning the cross.

Another reader of Barth who overemphasizes the motif of grace as a fitting overarching theme in the theology of Barth is Herbert Hartwell, who argues:

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<sup>15</sup> IV/3, 179. It is interesting to note Barth's reaction to Berkouwer's book and his views that Barth's theology was one of triumphant grace. Barth wrote to Berkouwer: "I'm a bit startled at the title, *The Triumph* ... Of course I used to use the word and still do. But it makes the whole thing seem so finished, which it isn't for me. *The Freedom* ... would have been better. And then instead of ... *Grace* I would much have preferred ... *Jesus Christ*. My intention, at any rate, has been that all my systematic theology should be as exact a development as possible of the significance of this 'name' (in the biblical sense of the term) and to that extent should be the telling of a *story* which develops through individual events," quoted in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His life from letters and autobiographical texts*, tr. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 381. Barth further writes, "We are concerned with the living person of Jesus Christ. Strictly, it is not grace, but He Himself as its Bearer, Bringer and Revealer, who is the Victory, the light which is not overwhelmed by darkness, but before which darkness must yield until it is itself overwhelmed," IV/3, 173.

<sup>16</sup> John Reist, "Commencement, Continuation, Consummation: Karl Barth's Theology of Hope," in *Evangelical Quarterly*, 87:3 (1987), 210.

it is no exaggeration to state that in a sense God's grace in Jesus Christ or, to put the same thought differently, God's gracious eternal Yea and Amen in Jesus Christ to His creation and, above all, to man is the starting-point and the dominant theme of his theology.<sup>17</sup>

Hartwell is correct in stating that God's gracious "Yes" to humanity is an important theme in Barth's theology. Hartwell understands it almost correctly when he writes:

It is true, God's Yes is not without His No, pronounced in Jesus Christ's sacrificial death upon the Cross on everything which is evil. However, this No, Barth teaches, is but the reverse of God's Yes to His good creation in that the latter implies His No to whatever is antagonistic to His good creation and for that reason is evil ... Thus His Yes and His No must be viewed together since neither of them can be properly understood apart from the other.<sup>18</sup>

It is because the no is only "implied" that Hartwell fails to appreciate adequately the seriousness that Barth places on the event of the cross which leads Hartwell to overemphasize the "Yes" of God in his description of Barth's theology. Because Hartwell fails to give necessary attention to the event of the cross in Barth's writings, Hartwell is in danger of allowing God's gracious "Yes" to swallow up God's "No" to sinful humanity in the judgement of Jesus Christ. Hartwell and Berkouwer are in danger of misreading Barth when they fail to recognise the extent to which Barth emphasizes the "No" to humanity in the event of the cross and its appropriation in several significant doctrines throughout Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

Gustaf Wingren also charges Barth with failing to address adequately the cross (specifically the judgement upon evil) and the resurrection, a failing which Wingren believes undermines Barth's entire theology. Wingren argues:

Barth has a tendency to shift the emphasis in the gospel of Christ from the death and resurrection to the incarnation, the birth, the miracle of Christmas. When the death and resurrection stand in the center – as they do in the four gospels and in the rest of the New Testament – the gospel has the character of struggle ... Barth's propensity for concentrating attention on the miracle of Christmas depends on the central position given to the unqualified concept of 'revelation.' 'God' reveals himself to 'man,' God appears in human form.<sup>19</sup>

Wingren argues that Barth's emphasis on God's self-revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ leads Barth's entire theological view to be misguided. He contends:

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<sup>17</sup> Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1964), 167-168.

<sup>18</sup> Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 117.

<sup>19</sup> Gustaf Wingren, *Theology in Conflict: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann*, tr. by Eric H. Wahlstrom (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 109. It is important to note that Wingren had access to Barth's *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/ 1 and 2 by 1958, but failed to use them adequately in his assessment of Barth's theology, for he drew primarily from *Church Dogmatics* volumes I and III for his criticisms of Barth.

It is, of course, true that Barth frequently speaks of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But the frame of reference remains well defined, the incarnation is the chief event, and the general concept of 'revelation' dominates the whole presentation.<sup>20</sup>

For Wingren, this emphasis on revelation "is not in harmony with the intentions of the Bible, and that, on the contrary, it disturbs the structure and perspective of the Bible."<sup>21</sup> The result of this revelatory emphasis, according to Wingren, is that Barth's theology fails to take evil seriously, because Barth "has removed the law as a power that rules over man even before the preaching of the gospel appears."<sup>22</sup> Wingren's concern is that Barth emphasizes the revelation of God to such an extent that he lacks the necessary teaching on the law and God's judgement upon humanity, and thus renders evil innocuous. Wingren argues:

The danger inherent in Barth's conception is that the gospel which bestows, not demands, righteousness loses its essential content. In its place there is a revelation of God in Christ, a revelation which supplies man's lack of knowledge of God; and from this kind of revelation it is possible to derive rules and regulations for human life.<sup>23</sup>

Wingren's primary error is that he fails to understand how Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is grounded in his doctrine of God and doctrine of election. This thesis will demonstrate that Barth understands God's self-revelation to occur in the incarnation of Jesus Christ specifically in the event of the cross and that judgement upon the sin of humanity occurs through the event of the cross. Contrary to Wingren's misplaced warnings, Barth's emphasis on the cross illustrates that he takes evil with appropriate seriousness through God's "No" to the disobedience of human sin and the divine judgement borne by Jesus Christ through his death on the cross.

## **B. Luther's Influence Upon Barth**

Before investigating Barth's writings on the event of the cross, it is important to examine some of the significant influences upon him. Lyle Dabney writes:

Although the theology of the cross has deep roots in Patristic theology and medieval piety, its flowering can be traced to young Martin Luther's attack upon medieval Scholasticism in the Heidelberg Disputation of April 1518.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Wingren, *Theology in Conflict*, 113.

<sup>21</sup> Wingren, *Theology in Conflict*, 109.

<sup>22</sup> Wingren, *Theology in Conflict*, 159.

<sup>23</sup> Wingren, *Theology in Conflict*, 128. Eberhard Busch writes, "Wingren, starting from a 'God-devil pattern', argued that Barth left out all kinds of things in his approach. Barth's own view was that 'I can only be refuted by a comprehensive outline which corresponds to my own, and not by such ... drollery,'" in *Karl Barth: His life from letters*, 402, quoting a letter to A. von Erlach, 22 Nov. 1949.

<sup>24</sup> D. Lyle Dabney, "Pneumatologia Crucis: Reclaiming *Theologia Crucis* for a Theology of the Spirit Today," *SJT*, 53:4 (2000), 513.

According to Luther, the event of Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the primary event from which all of Christian theology should be developed. Luther's understanding of the *theologia crucis* is summarised concisely in the Heidelberg Disputation:

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.<sup>25</sup>

For Luther, the cross of Jesus Christ is the event through which all Christian theology should be viewed. The event of the cross and the theology that arises when one approaches the event of the cross with utmost seriousness is the only theology fit to be called Christian theology. Luther explains:

The manifest and visible things of God are placed in opposition to the invisible, namely, his human nature, weakness, foolishness ... it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross ... true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ.<sup>26</sup>

It is through the cross of Christ that God's grace and love are recognisable to humanity. It is also the judgement of the cross of Christ that provides humanity with the foundation for Christian life. Luther divides theologians into two groups, those that focus on glory and those that focus on the cross of Christ. He defines those that focus on glory while failing to acknowledge fully the cross as "enemies of Christ." He states:

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls 'enemies of the cross of Christ' [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. Thus they call the good of the cross evil and the evil of a deed good.<sup>27</sup>

Luther argues that it is only when confronted by the cross that Christians truly begin their contemplation of God and learn to respond to God in faith. Accordingly:

God can only be found in the suffering and the cross ... Therefore the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are dethroned and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," in *Luther's Works* vol. 3, American Edition, ed. Harold Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 40.

<sup>26</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 3, 52-53.

<sup>27</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 3, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 3, 53.



Luther warns the church to turn away from its emphasis upon the works and good deeds of humanity and instead focus on what God has done in the cross of Jesus Christ and what God has revealed there.

Besides the judgement of God contained in the event of the cross, Luther also recognises that the self-revelation of God is made possible through Jesus Christ's death on the cross. "There on the cross, at this one place and cloaked in deepest weakness, God becomes visible."<sup>29</sup> The hidden God is revealed only as God reveals Godself through the cross, and is known to humanity only through faith. Alister McGrath explains:

God is revealed in the cross of Christ. Yet, as the Christian contemplates the appalling spectacle of Christ dying upon the cross, he is forced to concede that God does not appear to be revealed there at all. This insight is fundamental to a correct understanding of Luther's theology of the cross. The God who is crucified is the God who is hidden in his revelation.<sup>30</sup>

Luther's understanding of the hiddenness of God is closely connected to his view of faith as he struggles to answer the question of how finite men and women can know the infinite triune God. Von Loewenich outlines Luther's understanding of faith thus:

Man is equipped with understanding, but his entire higher ability of the soul (understanding and will) has been seriously weakened by original sin. This is the nature of sin, that man has turned away from the invisible to the visible. Thereby the ability of the understanding to know the supersensory has been corrupted. It can be restored only by grace ... Understanding of the invisible is possible only where faith is. But faith points back to grace. To the extent that the understanding belongs together with faith, it moves from the purely ontological sphere into a religious one ... Only one who has the Spirit of Christ attains to knowledge of the invisible.<sup>31</sup>

The two themes of the hiddenness of God and knowledge through faith culminate for Luther in his thoughts concerning the Christian life and suffering. According to von Loewenich:

Since the cross stands in the midst of Christ's life, the Christian's life is a discipleship of suffering. The idea of suffering in the theology of the cross does not rest on cosmological and metaphysical presuppositions, but is oriented to a concrete event ... In the theology of the cross suffering is understood throughout theologically, not anthropologically, that is, not on the basis of reflection on human nature, but on the basis of God's revelatory activity in history. And the fact that his revelation of God in history is summed up in the cross explains the high significance of the idea of suffering.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, tr. Herbert J.A. Bouman (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1976), 30.

<sup>30</sup> Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 161.

<sup>31</sup> Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 119-120. Gerhard O. Forde explains this concept of suffering in Luther: "[I]t is only *through suffering and the cross* that sinners can see and come to know God ... This suffering is from God and it is good. That is the deepest reason why we call the Friday of the crucifixion *good* ... For Luther, the sufferings of the spirit, the pangs of conscience, the terrors of temptation (*Anfechtungen*), were always more agonizing and serious

For Luther, events in the lives of men and women may be viewed in light of the cross. "When we bear our cross we are doing nothing special, but we are simply showing that we are linked together with Christ."<sup>33</sup> For Luther, the cross is the place where Christians learn how to live. Luther presents humility, trial and prayer as means by which the Christian can live a life of conformity with Christ under the cross. Loewenich observes that for Luther, "faith is denial of ourselves, total rejection of self and reliance on God's grace. In this negation of all human claims, faith is one with humility ... Humility is awareness of the fact that we cannot stand before God on the basis of our virtues."<sup>34</sup> Humility is put to test throughout the trials of life. Loewenich states that, "According to the theology of the cross the worst kind of trial consists in not having any trial; for trial keeps faith in motion."<sup>35</sup> Life under the cross is a life of trials that are endured with faith. Luther urges Christians to cling to the word of God during time of trials and rely upon God's faithful promises and the action of prayer. In prayer the Christian can seek humility, wisdom, and strength during times of trial. According to von Loewenich, "Prayer is not a little garden of Paradise, where the one who is weary of the Word of the cross might take a little rest, but prayer is just the battleground where the sign of the cross has been raised."<sup>36</sup> Luther's theology of the cross describes the life of Christians who find the self-revelation of God in the event of the cross and seek to live a life facing their trials in confident humility because of their faith in God. The cross, according to Luther, is the foundation for knowledge of God and the foundation for a Christian theology which seeks to articulate the love and grace of God through the salvific death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is evident that Barth was influenced by Luther's writings about the cross. In 1928, in an address to other preachers, Barth affirms Luther's protest against a *theologia gloriae* and urges his peers to define their preaching by the event of the cross.<sup>37</sup>

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than the physical pain ... The suffering Luther has in mind is something God inflicts on us just by virtue of the fact that he moves against the presumption of our works ... we are rendered totally *passive* by the divine operation through the cross and resurrection of Jesus," *On Being A Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 86-87.

<sup>33</sup> Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 120.

<sup>34</sup> Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 129.

<sup>35</sup> Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 135.

<sup>36</sup> Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 143.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, tr. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), 128-131. David Clough remarks, "Barth is concerned to press this Reformation challenge [of Luther's] on his contemporaries, and asks of the church whether its theology is a *theologia gloriae* or a *theologia crucis* ... Clearly, Barth sees a link here between his theology of crisis and Luther's theology of the cross," *Ethics in Crisis: Interpreting Barth's Ethics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 47.

The remainder of this thesis will examine the extent to which the event of the cross is found in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV and will note other instances of Barth's use of Luther.

Another important concept in Luther's articulation of the cross which is evident in Barth's writings is the concept of *Anfechtung*. McGrath explains that "For Luther, death, the devil, the world and Hell combine in a terrifying assault upon man, reducing him to a state of doubt and despair. *Anfechtung* is thus a state of hopelessness and helplessness, having strong affinities with the concept of *Angst*."<sup>38</sup> McGrath argues that the state of *Anfechtung* is resolved in humanity, according to Luther, "by the crucified Christ, who suffered precisely the same *Anfechtung* on our behalf, in order that his righteousness might become our righteousness."<sup>39</sup> McGrath continues, "As we contemplate the grim spectacle of the *angefochtene Christus* on the cross, we come to realise that Christ did not undergo *Anfechtung* for his own benefit, but for ours."<sup>40</sup> These themes will emerge again as we investigate the event of the cross in Barth's theology.

Before fully analysing the event of the cross in the theology of Karl Barth, it is important to note the influence of Luther throughout the *Church Dogmatics*. George Hunsinger remarks that, "No theologian receives a longer entry in the index volume to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* than Martin Luther."<sup>41</sup> If nothing else, at least this illustrates that Barth repeatedly engages with Luther throughout the *Church Dogmatics*.

Hunsinger argues that there are several specific theological themes that Barth learns from Luther. Hunsinger states, "Not least among the many powerful themes that Barth would absorb from Luther is that of 'christocentrism,' perhaps the most basic point in all of Barth's theology. Indeed, Barth not only owed this point to Luther but went on to radicalize it."<sup>42</sup> From this Christocentric perspective, Hunsinger argues that many soteriological themes also emerge.

That Christ alone is our salvation, that he is not an incomplete but a perfect Savior, that he is our righteousness on account of his obedience, that he is not the source of our righteousness without also being its reality and ground, that the righteousness we receive from him by faith does not come by portions and pieces but is already ours

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<sup>38</sup> McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 172.

<sup>39</sup> McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 173.

<sup>40</sup> McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 173.

<sup>41</sup> George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 279.

<sup>42</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 283.



whole and entire, that it is participatory before it is intrinsic – these are as much themes in Barth as in Luther, but they can be traced back to Luther alone.<sup>43</sup>

This particular emphasis on the person and work of Jesus Christ that Barth receives from Luther is exemplified by Barth's insistence on focusing on the specific event of Jesus Christ's death upon the cross. Hunsinger observes that "God is never more fully God, urged Barth in echo of Luther, than in the powerlessness and humiliation of the cross."<sup>44</sup> This emphasis on the humiliation of God leads to another theme Barth found in Luther. According to Hunsinger:

The glory of God is revealed in the face of the Christ who hung on the cross ... Divine impassibility must not prevent us from seeing the cross as 'the passion of God himself' (IV/1, 245). The 'mystery of this passion' – the passion of the impassible God – cannot possibly be expressed, as again Barth agreed with Luther, without paradox. Thus Barth could write that 'in this humiliation God is supremely God ... in this death he is supremely alive, in the passion of this man as his eternal Son he has maintained and revealed his deity' (IV/1, 246-47).<sup>45</sup>

Hunsinger cautions that this must be understood properly in Barth's writings:

Of course, unlike Luther, Barth recoiled from any suggestion that the cross entailed a contradiction or conflict in God's being itself, an idea he regarded as supremely blasphemous. The cross, Barth constantly stressed, was the deepest revelation of God's being, not its contradiction.<sup>46</sup>

Another theme that Barth develops from the thought of Luther concerns the Word of God and the hiddenness of God. Hunsinger explains that "As for Luther so also for Barth, the Word of God took unrivaled precedence over not only experience but also reason. No theology of the cross, our two theologians agreed, could avoid the scandal and the promise of hiddenness."<sup>47</sup> By locating the divine self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ and specifically in the event of his death on the cross, Barth stresses the hiddenness of God and the authority of Jesus as the Word of God. According to Hunsinger, this has significant implications:

Perhaps one way to appreciate the powerful impact on Barth of the primacy Luther assigned to God's Word would be to say that it led Barth, almost alone among modern theologians, to grant uncompromising precedence to the Reformation over modernity itself. Barth took Luther extremely seriously that, apart from God's Word, ultimate reality cannot possibly be known, and that it can be apprehended by faith alone. Barth by no means rejected modernity, but he accepted it only on Luther's own grounds.<sup>48</sup>

It is instructive to see how Barth strays from the Reformed tradition with this emphasis on the event of the cross. Hunsinger explains:

Here is a juncture where Barth faced a real choice between Luther and Calvin. Although Barth adopted a dialectical strategy that would attempt to do justice to the interests of both Reformers, and although the contrast here between Luther and Calvin

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<sup>43</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 286.

<sup>44</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 289.

<sup>45</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 289.

<sup>46</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 289-290.

<sup>47</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 290.

<sup>48</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 293.

can be overstated, the suffering of God was not a theme that Calvin was eager to embrace. Luther and Calvin both saw Jesus Christ as one person in two natures whose true deity and true humanity were joined by a relationship of unity-in-distinction. However, where Luther would focus on the unity, Calvin would in turn press the distinction. Nowhere were these differences manifest more significantly than at the point of the cross. Remembering the abiding distinction of Christ's deity from his humanity, Calvin insisted on the impassibility of the divine nature. Remembering the real unity of Christ's person, Luther by contrast affirmed the suffering of God. Although Barth respected Calvin's distinction, he moved far closer to Luther. For Barth the theology of the cross disclosed the suffering love of God.<sup>49</sup>

It is evident that Barth employs the writings of Luther, Calvin and others to combat what he views as errors within modern theology. Barth insists on the primacy of the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ's death on the cross for humanity's knowledge of God, for knowledge concerning God's reconciliation of God with humanity, and to help Christians learn how to respond obediently to the love and grace of God. This preliminary analysis illustrates that Barth draws upon Luther's theology in significant areas and that Luther's theology of the cross provides the background as Barth develops these themes further.

### **C. Jesus Christ's cry from the cross**

Throughout this thesis special attention is given to Barth's understanding of the cry of dereliction of Jesus Christ's from the cross as found in Mark 15:34 and Matthew 27:46. Barth writes about the cry of abandonment throughout the doctrine of reconciliation as he describes how God reconciles the world to Godself through the obedience of Jesus Christ. The cry of abandonment is significant for Barth as he explains:

the self-humiliation of God in His Son is genuine and actual, and therefore there is no reservation in respect of His solidarity with us. He did become – and this is the presupposition of all that follows – the brother of man, with him in the stream which hurries downwards to the abyss, hastening with him to death, to the cessation of being and nothingness. With him He cries – knowing far better than any other how much reason there is to cry: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' *Deus pro nobis* means simply that God has not abandoned the world and man in the unlimited need of his situation, but that He willed to bear this need as His own, that He took it upon Himself, and that He cries with man in this need.<sup>50</sup>

It is helpful to appreciate the varied context where Barth cites this passage in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/1. He cites this passage one time in the section 'The way of the Son of God into the Far Country,' three times in 'The Judge Judged in our Place' section, twice in the next section 'The Verdict of the Father,' twice in the section titled 'The Pride of Man' and twice in the section 'The

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<sup>49</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 287-288.

<sup>50</sup> IV/1, 215.

Justification of Man.’ It is clear that Barth uses this text for multiple theological explanations. In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/2 Barth explains the significance of the cross and the cry of abandonment:

So far we have hardly touched on what is denoted by the word ‘cross’ as a description of the whole existence and divine likeness and activity of the man Jesus. Yet, it is the cross which controls and penetrates and determines this whole ... As the Gospels put it, this man was not welcomed and accepted in the world and by the world in which He appeared in this superiority and in which He was the reflection of the fatherly heart of God and self-representation of His kingdom. On the contrary, He was rejected and destroyed... He had to suffer and die, and to do so as a malefactor against divine and human law. And He consented to do this. He accepted it of His own free will. He took it upon Himself. The end of His way was that He was led away; that He Himself went away into the darkness. This was the frontier from the far side of which the Gospels saw and understood and represented Him ... They did not gloss over it. They did not expunge it. On the contrary, they integrated the story of His passion with all that went before ... There is for them [the Gospel writers] no post-Easter Jesus who is not absolutely identical with the One whose pre-Easter existence this limit belonged. In the whole of the New Testament He is the Crucified, enclosing in Himself the whole of His being within this limit. Faith in Him is faith in the Crucified. Love for Him is love for the Crucified. Hope in Him is hope in the Crucified. All of the positive things included in the faith and love and hope of the community are confronted and characterised by, and related to this final negative. This final negative is the basis of the positivity of its faith and love and hope.<sup>51</sup>

Barth argues that the cry from the cross reveals the “No” of God as witnessed in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He argues:

in Mark (15:34) and Matthew (27:46) His only word on the cross, and therefore His final word, is the despairing question: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ The Gospels do not conceal the fact, but state it, that His death is a problem of the first magnitude. It is, in fact, the problem of all the problems of His existence and relationship to God and His life’s work. The darkness of His end is a true and final darkness. It is a darkness which even He Himself could not see through directly, but which had to be traversed like a tunnel.<sup>52</sup>

At no point in the *Church Dogmatics* does Barth attempt to detour from Jesus Christ’s experience of death on the cross or soften the event by focusing primarily on the grace or triumph of God as claimed by Berkouwer, Hartwell, and Wingren. In fact, it is only by viewing God as the One who elects to experience this death in order to reconcile humanity to Godself (through his articulation of the doctrine of God, election and reconciliation) that Barth approaches theology.

Throughout this thesis the cry of dereliction as employed in Barth’s writings will be compared to how this biblical text is used in the writings of other theologians including Jürgen Moltmann and von Balthasar. Moltmann is a valuable conversation partner because he was significantly influenced by Barth’s theology, yet was highly critical of it and attempted to correct what he found

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<sup>51</sup> IV/2, 249-250.

<sup>52</sup> IV/2, 250-251.

unsatisfactory.<sup>53</sup> Keeping in mind the misinterpretation of Barth's theology and Luther's development of the theology of the cross, this thesis seeks to examine the event of the cross as found in its fullest exposition in Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. This thesis will examine the event of the cross in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV as the event that provides the divine self-revelation of God to humanity, reconciles God and humanity, and elicits a corresponding human response. This inquiry will begin in the next chapter by analysing the beginning of the doctrine of reconciliation, which includes the establishment of the covenant between God and humanity and the rupturing of the covenant by human disobedience.

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<sup>53</sup> John Macquarrie goes as far to state that Moltmann's work "*The Crucified God* would have a good claim to be regarded as possibly the most important theological book published in the second half of the twentieth century," *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 321.

**Section One –  
The Need for The Cross**

## **Chapter 2**

### **Sin and Obedience in the Event of the Cross**

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV describes the institution of the divine covenant of grace and the fulfilment of the broken covenant through the person and work of Jesus Christ. For Barth, the event of the cross is the event that restores the covenant and reconciles God and humanity. God judges human sin and disobedience in the obedience and death of Jesus Christ. The obedience of Jesus Christ in the event of the cross reveals the seriousness of sin to men and women and illustrates true humanity. Busch explains:

The event in which God is 'affected and involved' with sin, and in which he wrestles with it, is identical – Barth's decisive discovery – with the event of the *reconciliation* of the world with God in Jesus Christ on the cross (2 Cor. 5:19). We can attain to the knowledge of sin only when the knowledge of the reality of this reconciliation is our starting point.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter focuses upon Barth's understanding of sin and obedience in the doctrine of reconciliation and the need for the divine judgement of the sins of humanity. The next four chapters will analyse how the reconciliation between God and humanity occurs in Barth's understanding of Jesus Christ "for us" as the One who acted obediently as the Judge who was judged in our place. This chapter will first explore Barth's understanding of sin and the restoration of the covenant, and will then briefly analyse the identity of the God who restores the covenant. It will finally compare the reason for the cross as found in the writings of Barth and Moltmann.

#### **A. The event of the cross and the revelation of sin**

According to Barth, "Atonement is the fulfilment by God of the covenant broken by man. Because he sins, and because the world is the world of sin and its consequences, man has need of conversion to God if he is not to perish."<sup>2</sup> Barth argues that Jesus Christ is the representative and the substitution for humanity who bears the punishment for the sins of humanity by his death upon the cross. However, we must note that for Barth, Jesus Christ's work for humanity does not

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<sup>1</sup> Busch, *The Great Passion*, 204.

<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 138.



end with his death. The doctrine of reconciliation explains that human sins are forgiven when the Son of God ventures to the far country and experiences death in the event of the cross, that Jesus Christ's righteousness is imputed to men and women with the exaltation of the Son of Man in his resurrection, and that Jesus Christ continues to act as prophetic mediator between God and humanity. The event of the cross reconciles God and humanity. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead reveals to men and women that the event of the cross was acceptable to God and, therefore, humanity may respond to God's love in obedience.

Barth explains the seriousness of sin and its consequences:

Because he negates God, the man elected by God, the object of the divine grace, is himself necessarily, and logically, and with all that it involves, the man negated by God. It is also true that God has sworn to be, and actually is, faithful, that God's grace does not fail but persists towards him. But within these limits it is unconditionally the case that as a sinner he is rejected by God, that he not only stands under the wrath and accusation of God, but because this wrath is well-founded and this accusation is true, he stands under His sentence and judgement. The grace of God is concealed under His sentence and judgement, His Yes under His No.<sup>3</sup>

Because of disobedience, men and women are under the judgement of sin and are in a state of perishing and death. Barth describes sin as nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) that opposes the will of God.

It [sin] does not belong to the creation of God. It can be present and active within it only as an alien ... If it has its place, it is that of an usurpation against the creative will of God, the place of an interloper ... in its nothingness, it does not exist in any way on the basis of its own independent right, or even in its dreadful reality by its own independent power ... It exists and is only in opposition to the will of God and therefore in opposition to the being and destiny of His creature.<sup>4</sup>

Although sin "is neither a creature nor itself a creator" it has the power to break the covenant between God and humanity.<sup>5</sup> "The sin of man, being his own doing and accomplishing of what God does not will, negates and withstands and rejects it. Sin is therefore not merely an evil, but a breach of the covenant which as such contradicts God and stands under His contradiction. Sin is man's denial of himself in the face of the grace of His Creator."<sup>6</sup> According to Barth, reconciliation consists of God's judgment of the sin of men and women and humanity's recognition of what sin is when it is revealed and judged in Jesus Christ. "The

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<sup>3</sup> IV/1, 173.

<sup>4</sup> IV/1, 139.

<sup>5</sup> IV/1, 140.

<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 140. Barth cautions: "Sin is a reality ... But it is not an autonomous reality. As the No which opposes the divine Yes, it is only a reality related to and contradicting that Yes. Therefore, it can be known— and all the horror of it can be known— only in the light of the Yes. In all its reality and horror it can never be a first word, nor can it ever be a final word." 144.

atonement made in Jesus Christ teaches us (as nothing else can) to know it [sin] and to take it seriously, but we also have to perceive and state that the gracious will and act of God in Jesus Christ are superior to it and overcome it.”<sup>7</sup> Through the person and work of Jesus Christ (and specifically in his death on the cross) humanity gains knowledge of human sin and the reconciling love of God. According to Barth:

The man of sin and his existence and nature, his why and whence and wither, are all set before us in Jesus Christ, and are spoken to us directly and clearly and incontrovertibly: Thou art the man! This is what thou doest! This is what thou art! This is the result! We hear Him and we hear this verdict. We see Him, and in this mirror we see ourselves, ourselves as those who commit sin and are sinners. We are here inescapably accused and irrevocably condemned.<sup>8</sup>

Webster argues that “Barth’s Christological determination of sin is not so much an attempt to dislocate ‘theological’ from ‘empirical’ reality, as an argument born of a sense that human persons are characteristically self-deceived.”<sup>9</sup> Barth states that it is “God alone who convinces man of his corruption, and when God does it He does it radically, and there is no possibility of any softening of the verdict that man is corrupt.”<sup>10</sup> The death of Jesus Christ on the cross confronts men and women and exposes them as sinners. “The superiority with which God confronts sin in Jesus Christ is that of His unconditional No to this element and to us as its representatives. It is a No in which there is no hidden Yes, no secret approval, no original or ultimate agreement.”<sup>11</sup>

Sin is revealed to humanity by looking at the life and work of Jesus Christ. Barth labels sin as pride, sloth and falsehood. Jorgenson argues that for Barth “sin is seen to oppose that which God did in Jesus Christ; sin as pride is opposition to the humiliation of God in Jesus Christ, sin as sloth in opposition to the exaltation of humanity in Jesus Christ, and sin as falsehood in opposition to the witness of our atonement as evidenced in Jesus Christ.”<sup>12</sup> However, the event of the cross not only exposes the sin of humanity, but it also reveals the love and grace of God.

The serious and terrible nature of human corruption, the depth of the abyss into which man is about to fall as the author of it, can be measured by the fact that the love of God could react and reply to this event only by His giving, His giving up, of Jesus Christ Himself to overcome and remove it and in that way to redeem man, fulfilling the

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<sup>7</sup> IV/1, 144.

<sup>8</sup> IV/1, 390.

<sup>9</sup> John Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 69.

<sup>10</sup> IV/1, 367.

<sup>11</sup> IV/1, 409.

<sup>12</sup> Allen G. Jorgenson, “Karl Barth’s Christological Treatment of Sin,” *SJT*, 54:4 (2001), 448.



judgment upon it in such a way that the Judge allowed Himself to be judged and caused the man of sin to be put to death in His own person.<sup>13</sup>

It is the act based on the eternal decision to become human and dwell among humanity when God chose to become incarnate and bear the sins of the world unto death upon the cross that reconciled God and humanity. It is in this act that men and women see human sin and can know themselves as reconciled children of God.

That Jesus Christ is very God is shown in His way into the far country in which He the Lord became servant. For in the majesty of the true God it happened that the eternal Son of the eternal Father became obedient by offering and humbling Himself to be the brother of man, to take His place with the transgressor, to judge him by judging Himself and dying in his place.<sup>14</sup>

Although the obedience of Jesus Christ and his death upon the cross judged humanity and bore the penalty of sin, it is through the resurrection that men and women understand that the life and death of Jesus Christ was acceptable to God. Humanity is liberated from sin by the event of the Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

The liberation of man from the misery created by his sloth is a reality and therefore a living hope for all other men only in the crucified Jesus. To free us He took it to Himself. He made it His own misery. And as the bearer of it He could only die. It was only in His death that He could set this term to it; that He could make an end of it.<sup>15</sup>

The narrative of reconciliation does not end with the event of the cross because "God the Father raised Him from the dead, and in so doing recognised and gave effect to His death and passion as a satisfaction made for us, as our conversion to God, and therefore as our redemption from death to life."<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that Barth upholds the event of the cross and the event of the resurrection as two distinct and yet united events in the narrative of God's reconciling act for humanity. Neither event must be ignored or overshadowed by the other. Both the event of the cross and the event of the resurrection must be proclaimed by the Christian community if men and women are to understand the restoration of the covenant and if individual men and women are to know to the love of God and their place within the salvific history of God's eternal will and action. Barth's

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<sup>13</sup> IV/1, 412.

<sup>14</sup> IV/1, 157.

<sup>15</sup> IV/2, 485. Webster states, "Barth's theology takes with great seriousness the command for rebellion against sin: the defeat of sin is not merely a vicarious achievement, passively received from the hands of an omnipotent Lord, but a summons to us to recover our agency and assume the liberty in which we stand," *Barth's Moral Theology*, 76. This will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter seven in the discussion of Barth's understanding of the human response to the event of the cross.

<sup>16</sup> IV/1, 157.

description of the relationship between the cross and the resurrection will be explored later in this thesis.

Barth explains that men and women are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and are “divinely altered” by the two fold “conversion of man to God.”<sup>17</sup> The conversion of men and women to God in Jesus Christ has both negative and positive aspects. Barth explains that first “the fulfilment and revelation of a verdict of God on man” is revealed to men and women.<sup>18</sup> The verdict upon the sin of humanity has been placed upon Jesus Christ in the event of the cross where it was judged, sentenced and executed accordingly. Barth argues:

In his [humanity's] place Jesus Christ has suffered the death of a malefactor. The sentence on him as a sinner has been carried out. It cannot be reversed. It does not need to be repeated. It has fallen instead on Jesus Christ. In and with the man who was taken down dead on Golgotha man the covenant-breaker is buried and destroyed ... God has vindicated Himself in relation to this man, as He did as Creator in relation to chaos.<sup>19</sup>

That is the negative aspect to the verdict of God upon humanity, but Barth stresses that there is also a positive aspect.

It is a verdict which recognises and accepts. With all the truth and validity and force of a sentence which has not only been pronounced but executed and therefore pronounced once and for all, it declares that God receives man, and that man in accordance with his election and institution as a covenant-partner – can confess himself a faithful servant of God, His recognised friend and well-loved child.<sup>20</sup>

In the act of reconciling humanity to Godself, the negative aspect of the verdict is accomplished when the sin of men and women is judged in Jesus Christ and the positive verdict is accomplished when they are declared righteous and are received by God as covenant partners. Barth understands that “Justification definitely means the sentence executed and revealed in Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, the No and the Yes with which God vindicates Himself in relation to covenant-breaking man, with which He converts him to Himself and therefore reconciles him with Himself.”<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Barth adds that:

we can understand the concept of justification in all its truth and individual force only when we see that basically and inclusively it stands for God's acting and speaking in His own cause, in fulfilment of His eternal will with man. Only then and on that basis does it stand for the grace and the goodness and mercy of God as they come to man.<sup>22</sup>

When men and women are reconciled to God in Jesus Christ through faith they are converted to God and fellowship between humanity and God is made possible. To

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<sup>17</sup> IV/1, 92-93.

<sup>18</sup> IV/1, 93.

<sup>19</sup> IV/1, 93-94.

<sup>20</sup> IV/1, 94.

<sup>21</sup> IV/1, 96.

<sup>22</sup> IV/1, 96.

understand oneself as human and to understand God's eternal decision to become incarnate and reconcile the world to Godself, one must look to Jesus Christ. Allen Jorgenson states that for Barth:

the knowledge of sin is only possible in the light of the revelation of God and humanity in the God-man Jesus Christ. Consequently, the doctrine of reconciliation is the proper place for the knowledge of sin in so far as Jesus, the one who knew no sin, was made to be sin 'so that we might become the righteousness of God' (1 Cor. 5:21). To know sin one must face the one who became sin for our sakes.<sup>23</sup>

Although it will be commented upon later, it is essential to note here that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and in willing obedience bore the divine judgement upon the sins of humanity. Barth states:

If anything is in bitter earnest it is the fact that God Himself in His eternal purity and holiness has in the sinless man Jesus Christ taken up our evil case in such a way that He willed to make it, and has in fact made it, His own. He did not, in fact, spare His only Son but delivered Him up for us all (Romans 8:32). And the sinlessness, the obedience of this one man ... is that He did not refuse to be delivered up and therefore to take the place of us sinners.<sup>24</sup>

The death of Jesus Christ not only accomplishes the judgement of the sins of humanity but the event of the cross is the place, for Barth, that the sins of humanity are revealed and recognised by men and women. "The same Jesus Christ who 'has endured such contradiction of sinners against himself' (Heb. 12:3) and revealed the reality of human sin in this His suffering is also the Judge who discloses its sinfulness."<sup>25</sup> The death of Jesus on the cross illustrates the misery of sin to humanity:

He [Jesus Christ] was the divine Judge and fulfilled the divine judgement in such a way that He caused Himself to be judged, so that we should not suffer what we deserved, so that we should be those who are judged in His person. This is the humility of the act of God which has taken place for us in Jesus Christ. But the man in whom God becomes a brother in order to do this for him, is the very opposite of all this, the man who sets himself in the wrong by wanting to be his own judge instead of allowing that God is in the right against him ... His [sinful man] own judging and deciding lead him into a constant fog and error. Neither in his own cause nor in that of others can he be a wise and righteous judge.<sup>26</sup>

Barth argues that men and women want to be the judge and they rebel against the sovereignty of God even when they attempt to perform righteous deeds. Barth emphatically states:

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<sup>23</sup> Jorgenson, "Karl Barth's Christological Treatment of Sin," 439.

<sup>24</sup> IV/1, 237. Douglas Farrow explains, "Barth's determination always to regard Jesus Christ in terms of covenant history is not merely anti-Marcionite (though it is that). It belongs fundamentally to his interpretation of the incarnation as reconciliation, and reconciliation as incarnation," in "Karl Barth on the Ascension: An Appreciation and Critique," in *IJST*, 2:2 (2000), 133.

<sup>25</sup> IV/1, 399-400.

<sup>26</sup> IV/1, 445-446.

As judge of good and evil, man wants to stand at God's side in defence of the cosmos great and small against the invasion of chaos and disorder and wrong ... And it is a really shattering fact that he is mistaken in all this, that he ought not to do it any cost, because he lets hell loose by doing it.<sup>27</sup>

Barth points to the event of the cross as the place where the sins of men and women are revealed in stark seriousness and reality. Later in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/3 Barth states that:

The Christian concept of sin as man's aberration and transgression is not to be gained from abstract norms of the good and just and holy and proper which are then adorned with the name of the Law of God, as though we thought we could construct it from general anthropological axioms and their implications, or by systematising and standardising certain biblical statements. The doctrine of sin cannot be established, expounded or developed independently of or prior to the doctrine of reconciliation.<sup>28</sup>

It is evident that, for Barth, humanity recognises disobedient sinful behaviour by examining the event of the cross.

In the section of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/1 in which Barth elaborates the concept of sin within the doctrine of reconciliation (The Pride and Fall of Man) Barth twice cites Jesus Christ's cry from the cross. Both passages contrast human sin to the cry of Jesus on the cross. Barth explains:

To know human sin in the form of human pride we look ... to the being and activity of Jesus Christ and we now think to the final depth of His humiliation, of the Son of God who cried on the cross: 'My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?' ... Taking our place, bearing the judgement of our sin, undertaking our case, He gave Himself to the depth of the most utter helplessness ... This is – in its sharpest form – the humility of the act of God which took place for us in Jesus Christ. But the man whose place and kind God made His own in Jesus Christ is, in clear antithesis to the One who in this way humbled Himself for him, the man who has always thought and still thinks that he can help himself and that in this self-help he has a claim to the help of God.<sup>29</sup>

The sin and stubborn disobedience of men and women is clearly seen in contrast to the obedience and humility of Jesus Christ on the cross. God created humanity for fellowship, but humanity rebelled and disobeyed God through acts of sin and pride. Barth again mentions Jesus Christ's cry from the cross in contrasting the humility of Jesus Christ to the pride of men and women:

His [humanity's] pride also means that he wants to be his own helper. He lives in this meaningless idea. This proud man God has reconciled and converted to Himself in Jesus Christ. The action of the divine physician corresponds to his mortal sickness. On his behalf Jesus Christ cried on the cross, the helpless One taking the place of all those who gaily help themselves: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> IV/1, 450. Barth explains, "I am already choosing wrong when I think I know and ought to decide what is right, and I am doing wrong when I try to accomplish that which I have chosen as right ... For when I do this I divide myself and I break the fellowship between myself and others," IV/1, 451.

<sup>28</sup> IV/3, 369.

<sup>29</sup> IV/1, 458.

<sup>30</sup> IV/1, 467.

These two passages that discuss the cry of dereliction illustrate the need of men and women to be reconciled to God and the obedience that accomplished that reconciliation in the death of Jesus Christ.

## **B. The restoration of the covenant**

Prior to examining the person and work of Jesus Christ in detail, Barth discusses the covenant as the presupposition of reconciliation.

‘Reconciliation’ is the restitution, the resumption of a fellowship which once existed but was then threatened by dissolution. It is the maintaining, restoring and upholding of that fellowship in the face of an element that which disturbs and disrupts and breaks it.<sup>31</sup>

It is the sin of humanity that disrupts the covenant, but an act of God that restores it. According to Barth:

God re-establishes the covenant, or, rather, He maintains and continues it, in order to lead to his goal the man whom He has brought into covenant with Him. Whatever connexions there may be before or behind, they do not alter the fact that in so doing God makes a completely new start as the freest possible subject.<sup>32</sup>

It is essential to understand how God accomplishes the restoration of the covenant because the act of reconciliation “is the place and the only place from which as Christians we can think forwards and backwards, from which both a Christian knowledge of both God and man is possible.”<sup>33</sup> For Barth, the act of reconciliation “is God’s crossing the frontier to man: supremely legitimate and yet supremely inconceivable – or conceivable only in the fact of His power and love.”<sup>34</sup>

The relationship that once existed between humanity and God was ruptured by human sin, and is repaired and restored by God, through the life and death of Jesus Christ. “God has always kept it [the covenant] but man has broken it. God was not ready to acquiesce in the fact that while He was for us we were

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<sup>31</sup> IV/1, 22.

<sup>32</sup> IV/1, 79. Barth argues that, “If the atonement is an act of divine sovereignty, we are forbidden to try to deduce it from anything else or deduce anything else from it. But, above all, we are commanded to accept and acknowledge it in all its inconceivability as something that has happened, taking it strictly as it is without thinking round it or over it,” IV/1, 80-81.

<sup>33</sup> IV/1, 81. Joseph Mangina notes that “Covenant-language and reconciliation-language interact in complex ways throughout the *Church Dogmatics*. What is important to bear in mind is that covenant and reconciliation are neither to be separated nor collapsed into one another,” *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 154.

<sup>34</sup> IV/1, 82.



against Him. That had to be altered, and in Jesus Christ it has in fact been altered once and for all.”<sup>35</sup> Hans Küng explains that, for Barth:

the eternal original foundation for justification is God’s gracious election in Jesus Christ. This gracious election is nothing else than God’s eternal *covenant* with men. Before and beyond all time God chooses in Jesus Christ to be a covenant God and consequently to have man as His covenant partner. Yet this covenant does not remain hidden in eternity; rather it is revealed in time.<sup>36</sup>

According to Barth, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross restores the covenant and reconciles God and humanity.

Drawing from the biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments, Barth recounts God’s creation, calling, protection and on-going relationship with humanity and he describes the relationship between God and humanity with the term covenant. Barth explains:

Common to both Old and New Testaments is, of course, the proclamation of the covenant of grace as the promise of lordship and salvation of God among men and for them ... But in the Old Testament it is only a promise ... The man Jesus is the fulfilment of this promise, the Messiah of Israel who in the place and name of all Israel does as man that which corresponds to what God does.<sup>37</sup>

In the Old Testament the Jewish community is called into covenant by God and become the elect people of God. In the Old Testament we see humanity’s disobedience and unfaithfulness to God and the rupture of the covenant between God and humanity.

The sin and sins of man form the disruptive factor within creation which makes necessary the atonement, the new peace with God, the restoration of the covenant with a view to the glory of God and the redemption and salvation of man as the work of God’s free mercy. Sin, therefore, is the obstacle which has to be removed and overcome in the reconciliation of the world as its conversion to Him.<sup>38</sup>

In Jesus Christ God restores the covenant and reconciles God and humanity. Barth states that:

where in the Old Testament we find Israel, or the king of Israel, in the New Testament we find the one Israelite Jesus. He is the object of the same electing will of the Creator, the same merciful divine faithfulness ... For this one man ... is the Son of God who is one with God the Father and is Himself God. God is now not only the electing Creator, but the elect creature. He is not only the giver, but also the recipient of grace. He is not only the One who commands, but the One who is called and pledged to obedience.<sup>39</sup>

Barth uses the New Testament text and the institution of the Eucharist to explain the reconciliation. Barth writes:

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<sup>35</sup> IV/1, 89.

<sup>36</sup> Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 18.

<sup>37</sup> IV/2, 822.

<sup>38</sup> IV/1, 253.

<sup>39</sup> IV/1, 170.

In the accounts of the Last Supper in 1 Cor. 11:25 and Luke 22:20 that which is actuality and truth in Jesus Christ, that which takes place in Him as event and revelation, is called 'the new covenant in my blood,' while in Mark (14:24) and Matthew 26:28 it is described conversely and more simply as 'my blood of the covenant.' In both cases the unity of outlook and concept is evident. In the shedding of Christ's blood, i.e., in the offering of His life to the powers of death we have the constancy, the maintenance or the restitution of the covenant between God and man ... Therefore, if this covenant, this peace, this reconciliation with Him, this access to Him is the meaning and purpose of the act which He has accomplished for us, then it is the unanimous witness of these passages that this took place in the blood, in the cross, in the death of Jesus Christ and not in any other place, at any other time or in any other way.<sup>40</sup>

The sin of humanity ruptures the divine covenant, but it is God who restores it. "Man's wrong cannot be merely his own affair. It takes place in his relationship with God."<sup>41</sup> For Barth, the place where sin was dealt with by God is the event of the cross. "Sin is transgression ... And as transgression *sans phrase* [without qualification] it is not tolerated let alone accepted in the death of Jesus Christ. It is not even merely condemned, but broken and rejected. It can only be covered by God. It can only be forgiven to man."<sup>42</sup>

Barth's reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in relation to the life and death of Jesus Christ is important for comprehending how the event of the cross fulfils the restoration of the covenant in his doctrine of reconciliation. According to Kathryn Tanner:

The Bible's discussion of creation and providence reflects what God does in Jesus Christ as much as (indeed, Barth would say better than) it reflects the covenant history between Israel and God (III/1, 276, 320f.). Christian accounts of creation that hope to be biblical therefore cannot give isolated attention, as they usually do, to the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, filling out their theological meaning from who knows where. Instead, the meaning of those chapters must be developed in light of the Bible's treatment of the whole covenant history of God and Israel that culminates in Jesus, in such a way that what the New Testament proclaims about Jesus is the key to understanding all that comes before it in the Bible.<sup>43</sup>

Barth describes the covenant as a covenant of grace, "instituted by God Himself in the fullness of sovereignty and in the freest determination and decree."<sup>44</sup> He explains the restoration of the covenant and the doctrine of reconciliation by stating:

The will of God is done in Jesus Christ, in God's own being and acting and speaking as man ... The work of atonement in Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the communion of

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<sup>40</sup> IV/1, 252.

<sup>41</sup> IV/1, 535.

<sup>42</sup> IV/1, 410.

<sup>43</sup> Kathryn Tanner, "Creation and Providence," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 113-114.

<sup>44</sup> IV/1, 23.

Himself with man and of man with Himself which He willed and created at the very first.<sup>45</sup>

God chooses in eternity to be “God with us” and to reconcile the world by becoming incarnate, and living a life of obedience unto death.

As Barth writes about the covenant in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/1 he draws upon the discussion concerning the covenant in relation to creation found in volume III/1. Paul Metzger explains, “Barth writes that the creation is the outer and external basis of the covenant, that is, the doctrine of reconciliation.”<sup>46</sup> There are several important implications for Barth’s establishment of creation as the external basis for the doctrine of reconciliation. According to Metzger:

First, the doctrine of *creation* has no existence independent from the person of Jesus Christ. As the arena in which God’s eternal election in the covenant in Jesus Christ is fulfilled, the doctrine of creation is inseparably related to Jesus Christ ... Second, the way which Barth relates creation to covenant implies that *humanity* itself has no existence independent of this covenant relationship, thereby guarding against ontological alienation ... Third, Barth’s understanding of creation and history as serving as the stage on which the history of the covenant of redemption is realized indicates that God’s redemption is not to be viewed as a flight from history.<sup>47</sup>

For Barth, this means that God is active in reconciling humanity and has not abandoned men and women. Barth’s articulation of the restoration of the covenant through the event of the cross illustrates this understanding of God’s love and continuing care for humanity.

There are critics who challenge Barth’s articulation of the restoration of the covenant with reference to God’s eternal election and the death of Jesus Christ. Douglas Milne argues that:

Barth formulates the covenant in relation to one elect person Jesus Christ in whose election the whole of God’s predestination occurs. In opting for a revised supralapsarian doctrine of predestination, Barth is in danger of absorbing the individual with his historical decision of faith as human subject into the one subject Jesus Christ in his eternal predetermination. The one story of Jesus Christ then negates the real life stories of other men and women.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> IV/1, 36.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Louis Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 104-105.

<sup>47</sup> Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture*, 105-106. However, Metzger also points out tensions with these implications. He cautions that creation may end up being overshadowed by reconciliation and the goodness of creation might be overlooked if creation is solely emphasized as a vehicle of reconciliation. Metzger explains, “Although creation is an indispensable companion to the covenant of God, it is the *outer* circle. Although creation plays an indispensable role, it is subordinate to redemption. It is a means to an end, the end of reconciliation, which suggests that Barth does not give enough space to creation in relation to the covenant,” *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture*, 111-112.

<sup>48</sup> Douglas J.W. Milne, “A Barthian Stricture on Reformed Theology- The Unconditionality of the Covenant of Grace,” in *The Reformed Theological Review*. 55:2 (1996), 132. Nigel Biggar points out similar fears when he cautions that Barth “places *all* human beings in the order of



This specific criticism that Barth's understanding of reconciliation excludes human agency may be refuted by exploring Barth's understanding of the divine covenant; other criticisms concerning the integrity of humans as ethical agents will be discussed in chapter seven.

John Webster suggests there are three implications for recognising reconciliation in terms of the restoration of the covenant. First, he states that "covenant offers a way of talking about the ordered mutuality of God and humanity in which God elects a people to have their being in obedient consent to their election."<sup>49</sup> Second, "there is a most deliberate Christological concentration"<sup>50</sup> as Barth describes the restoration of the covenant in the person and work of Jesus Christ as "God with us." Webster notes that "Covenant means that the God encountered in the gospel is (and does not merely represent) the one true God; there is no other – hidden, fleshless – God behind the divine act in Jesus Christ."<sup>51</sup> Men and women are confronted by the judgement of God and the grace of God in the obedient life and death of Jesus Christ. Finally, Webster points out that Barth's use of the term covenant contains a "soteriological or anthropological corollary: because covenant means 'God with us', it also means 'we with God'."<sup>52</sup> The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the incarnation restores the covenantal relationship between God and humanity, and therefore implications for both God and humanity. Humanity is drawn up into the life of God through the restoration of the covenant in Jesus Christ and can now participate in the life of God. Webster explains:

On Barth's reading, election is a teleological act on the part of God, having as its end the life-act of the creature whom God elects into covenant with himself ... This directedness towards, and claim upon, the human creature and the creature's act, in which God elects a path for himself and elects us as partners, is very close to the centre of what Barth wants to say about God and God's covenant ... Election is not a decree imposed and, as it were, complete in its imposition, requiring no corresponding attitude and activity on the part of the one determined; it is, instead, the movement of the being of God, carrying with it, and establishing, the human agent.<sup>53</sup>

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reconciliation ... Barth's concern here is to emphasize the triumph of God's grace in Jesus Christ and how it serves human dignity. But the unavoidable implication of the manner in which he chooses to do this is that human beings are ultimately determined by God's grace, and that liberation is in the end an inexorable necessity," *The Hastening that Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>49</sup> John Webster, *Barth* (London: Continuum, 2004), 118-119.

<sup>50</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 119.

<sup>51</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 119.

<sup>53</sup> John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49.

Contrary to Milne's fear that reconciliation negates human agency, the restoration of the covenant establishes men and women in proper relationship to God and summons them to respond to the reconciling action of God in Jesus Christ, in addition to providing the opportunity for human fellowship with God.

### **C. The identity of God who is with us and restores the covenant in Jesus Christ**

Although the identity of the triune God will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, it is important to note that before discussing the work and person of Jesus Christ in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV Barth reviews the identity of God as discussed in earlier volumes. For Barth, the doctrine of reconciliation is grounded in the doctrine of God, and therefore, Jesus Christ is both revelatory and effective. Barth explains that "Our starting point is that this 'God with us' at the heart of the Christian message is the description of an act of God, or better, of God Himself in this act of His."<sup>54</sup> The person and work of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation. Barth argues:

the man in whom God Himself intervenes for us, suffers and acts for us, closes the gap between Himself and us and our representative, in our name and on our behalf, this man is not merely the confirmation and guarantee of our salvation, but because He is God He is salvation, our salvation.<sup>55</sup>

Barth writes, "The name of Jesus Christ covers the whole power of the Christian message because it indicates the whole of its content, because at its heart, which is normative for the whole, it is a message about Him, and therefore a message about the event of that 'God with us'."<sup>56</sup> According to Barth, the being of Jesus Christ describes action within the life of the triune God in a particular and actual event – an event that is redemptive, and an event by which God makes Godself known to humanity. The history of Jesus Christ as "God with us" is not only the narrative events of one man from Nazareth, but incorporates the entire salvation history of humanity and God's restoration of the covenant through him.

It is important to note that the basis of Barth's discussion of reconciliation is the person of Jesus Christ. "The atonement is, noetically, the history about Jesus Christ, and ontically, Jesus Christ's own history. To say atonement is to say Jesus

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<sup>54</sup> IV/1, 6.

<sup>55</sup> IV/1, 13.

<sup>56</sup> IV/1, 18.

Christ.”<sup>57</sup> What is accomplished by God is accomplished in Jesus Christ and nowhere else.

For He is the history of God with man and the history of man with God. What takes place in this history – the accusation and conviction of man as a lost sinner, his restoration, the founding and maintaining and sending of the community of God in the world, the new obedience of man – is all decided and ordained by Him as the One who primarily acts and speaks in it.<sup>58</sup>

Although focused on the person of Jesus Christ, Barth makes it clear that it is the triune God acting in history that accomplishes the restoration of the covenant between God and humanity. According to Barth, in the atonement Jesus Christ:

was and is and will be very God in the fact that as the Son He willed to be obedient to the Father, and to become the servant of all and therefore man and therefore the One who fulfilled in His death the reconciling will of God; and ... in the power of His resurrection He is all this for us by the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

Although the event of the cross focuses on the death of Jesus Christ, Barth maintains that it is the sovereign act based on the eternal decision of the triune God that accomplishes the restoration of the covenant.

The freedom and sovereignty of God is stressed in Barth’s articulation of reconciliation.

The Christian theological tradition has always been in agreement that the statement ‘The Word was made flesh’ is not to be thought of as describing an event that overtook Him, and therefore overtook God Himself, but rather a free divine activity, a sovereign act of divine lordship, an act of mercy which was necessary only by virtue of the will of God Himself ... God is always God even in His humiliation.<sup>60</sup>

In the divine act of reconciliation, God “humbled Himself, but He did not do it by ceasing to be who He is. He went into a strange land, but even there, and especially there, He never became a stranger to Himself.”<sup>61</sup> Barth explains:

God gives Himself, but he does not give Himself away. He does not give up being God in becoming a creature, in becoming man. He does not cease to be God. He does not come into conflict with Himself. He does not sin when in unity with the man Jesus. He mingles with sinners and takes their place. And when he dies in His unity with this man, death does not gain any power over Him. He exists as God in the righteousness and the life, the obedience and the resurrection of this man. He makes His own the being of man in contradiction against Him, but He does not make common cause with it. He also makes His own the being of man under the curse of this contradiction, but in order to do away with it as He suffers it. He acts as Lord over this contradiction even as He subjects Himself to it. He frees the creature in becoming a creature. He overcomes the flesh in becoming flesh. He reconciles the world with Himself as He is in Christ.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> IV/1, 158.

<sup>58</sup> IV/1, 158.

<sup>59</sup> IV/1, 159.

<sup>60</sup> IV/1, 179.

<sup>61</sup> IV/1, 180.

<sup>62</sup> IV/1, 185.

Reconciliation occurs when God becomes incarnate and the divine Judge who judges the sin of the world, obediently humbles himself and becomes the judged One. In the section just prior to “The Judge Judged in Our Place” Barth draws upon the parable of the prodigal son who travels to the distant far country and is joyfully welcomed home by his loving father. Through the incarnation God becomes human and acts “for us” which means “simply that God has not abandoned the world and man in the unlimited need of his situation, but that He willed to bear this need as His own, that He took it upon Himself, and that He cries with man in this need.”<sup>63</sup> God bears the burden of the judgement upon the sins of humanity and reconciles the world to God.

It is important to note that Barth’s explanation of the eternal covenant has an ontological implication. Bruce McCormack states that the “eternal act of establishing a covenant of grace is an act of Self-determination by means of which God determines to be God, from everlasting to everlasting, in a covenantal relationship with human beings and to be God in no other way.”<sup>64</sup> The covenant was created by God who chooses to be God in relationship and fellowship with humanity. Humanity fails to maintain the covenant and lacks the means necessary to restore the covenant and relationship with God. It is the loving and gracious eternal act of God and the event of the cross that restores the covenant and makes possible the fellowship between God and humanity. This ontological significance of God’s election will be explored further in chapter three.

At the beginning of the doctrine of reconciliation, in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV, Barth stresses the importance of understanding the person of Jesus Christ as Immanuel, or “God with us.” According to Barth:

the self-humiliation of God in His Son is genuine and actual, and therefore there is no reservation in respect of His solidarity with us. He did become – and this is the presupposition of all that follows – the brother of man, with him in the stream which hurries downwards to the abyss, hastening with him to death, to the cessation of being and nothingness. With him He cries – knowing far better than any other how much reason there is to cry: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ *Deus pro nobis* means simply that God has not abandoned the world and man in the unlimited need of his situation, but that He willed to bear this need as His own, that He took it upon Himself, and that He cries with man in this need.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> IV/1, 215.

<sup>64</sup> Bruce McCormack, “Grace and Being: The role of God’s gracious election in Karl Barth’s theological ontology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 98.

<sup>65</sup> IV/1, 215.

Jesus Christ's cry from the cross illustrates to humanity the love of God who reconciles God to women and men as it articulates the extent to which God became human.

That the Word became 'flesh' means that the Son of God made His own the situation of man in the sense that with him He faced the impossible in all its power, that He faced the dreadful possibility of ingratitude, disobedience, unfaithfulness, pride, cowardice and deceit, that He knew it as well as He did Himself, that He came to closer grips with it than any other man.<sup>66</sup>

Although men and women may understand the reconciliation of the world to God and have hope through the event of the resurrection, Barth recognises the seriousness of the event of the cross. It is Jesus Christ's cry from the cross that illustrates to humanity that "the grace of God is not a cheap grace. It cost God dear enough to give this answer, to send His Son as the Saviour of the world."<sup>67</sup> The cry of the cross illustrates the cost of Jesus Christ's death on the cross for God as God reconciles the world. Barth explains:

the coming into the world of the Son of God includes within itself the appearance and work of the Judge of the world and of every man. If He were not the Judge He would not be the Saviour. He is the Saviour of the world in so far as in a very definite (and most astonishing) way He is also its Judge.<sup>68</sup>

This articulation of Jesus Christ as the Judge who is judged in place of humanity will be analysed in detail in the following four chapters of this thesis but for now it is essential to see that for Barth, Jesus Christ's death on the cross illustrates God's love for humanity and reconciles humanity to God.

#### **D. Comparing why the cross was necessary in Barth and Moltmann**

It is important to compare the writings of Moltmann to Barth because, although they share some theological insights, they vary in their understanding of why the cross was necessary. Moltmann learned much from Barth, yet strove to correct him in various ways, many of which will be explored throughout this thesis. This section will offer a preliminary introduction to the writings of Moltmann concerning the event of the cross by investigating his understanding of the reasons for the cross.

As we have already noted, for Barth, the cross was necessary to restore the covenant and judge the sins of disobedient humanity. For Moltmann, the cross is

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<sup>66</sup> IV/1, 215-216.

<sup>67</sup> IV/1, 216.

<sup>68</sup> IV/1, 216-217.



necessary for different reasons. Moltmann focuses on the historical and cultural context of the crucifixion and the eschatological meaning of the resurrection. He states that “there are two possible ways of understanding his [Jesus’] death on the cross: we can understand his violent end in the context of his life, and we can understand it in the context of the primitive Christian belief in the resurrection.”<sup>69</sup> Looking at the first way Moltmann understands the cross, one can see that he emphasizes the historical reality of the crucifixion (in a way that is somewhat similar to Barth as both men state that the crucifixion is a historical event). Moltmann argues that Jesus’ crucifixion is a “consequence of his ministry” and that his death “must be understood in the context of the conflicts between him and the world around him.”<sup>70</sup> Moltmann explains why Jesus was a threat to the religious authorities and was killed:

Anyone who preaches the imminent kingdom of God not as judgement, but as the gospel of justification of sinners by grace, and demonstrates it as such through his life with sinners and tax-collectors, contradicts the hope based upon the law, is deceiving the sinners and tax-collectors and is blaspheming the God of hope.<sup>71</sup>

It was not the fact the Jesus was preaching but that he was claiming “the righteousness of God on behalf of those outside the law, and the transgressors of the law, [and] was in contradiction to the traditions of his people.”<sup>72</sup> According to Moltmann, the cross was a necessary consequence of Jesus Christ’s ministry. “He did not die through chance or misfortune, but died by the law as one who was ‘reckoned with transgressors’ (Luke 22:37), because he was condemned as a ‘blasphemer’ by the guardians of the law and of faith. As they understood it, his death was the carrying out of the curse of the law.”<sup>73</sup> Besides being a threat to the religious leaders, Moltmann also describes Jesus as a troublemaker, who was a threat to the political leaders. “Like the Zealots, Jesus broke with the *status quo* and those who maintained it in being. Like them, he provoked tangible political unrest (*stasis*). He was therefore crucified by the Romans as a ‘Zealot leader’.”<sup>74</sup> Moltmann states the reason for Jesus Christ’s death:

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<sup>69</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: Fortress Press, 1993), 126.

<sup>70</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 127.

<sup>71</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 129.

<sup>72</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 143. It is important to note that Moltmann lists various reasons why Jesus was considered a Zealot and why he was also distinct from the Zealot movement during his time. Moltmann continues, “But in fact, he was breaking with a quite different *status quo* from the Zealots. Unlike them, he was breaking not merely with a compromising transgression of the law and Gentile lawlessness, in order to restore the law, but was breaking with legalism – in so far as it concentrated upon the *jus talionis* [the right of retaliation or the principle that the



The gospel of Jesus and his public behaviour were political in the extreme. He was bound to be understood as both religious and political, even if this did not mean that he himself was not understood as an object of faith. Consequently, he alienated both the anti-Roman Zealots and the anti-Jewish Romans. Both knew their business, the use of armed force as divine judgement, as was the custom in the world of that time. But Jesus interfered in this religious and political business to challenge and disrupt its rules, and 'had to be' removed.<sup>75</sup>

It is clear that Moltmann stresses the political and religious context of Jesus Christ's death on the cross more than Barth. Although Barth would not argue against these cultural factors that facilitated the death of Jesus Christ, Barth stresses the act of God and the divine covenant and judgement upon human sin as the reason for the event of the cross. Moltmann does not ignore the presence and act of God, but it is not as significant in his theology because he stresses the political and cultural aspects of the event of the cross over the theological reasons. After explaining in detail the political and cultural factors that necessitated the cross, Moltmann explains the theological reason for the cross. "Why did Jesus die? He died not only because of the understanding of the law by his contemporaries or because of Roman power politics, but ultimately because of his God and Father."<sup>76</sup> It is in this explanation that Moltmann begins to describe the God abandonment and suffering of Jesus Christ and how it relates to his understanding of reconciliation:

Not until we understand his abandonment by the God and Father whose imminence and closeness he had proclaimed in a unique, gracious and festive way, can we understand what was distinctive about his death. Just as there was a unique fellowship with God in his life and preaching, so in death there was a unique abandonment by God.<sup>77</sup>

Moltmann understands that Jesus Christ was unique in his relationship to God in life and in death as he stresses the triune activity of God in the event of the cross.

If, abandoned by his God and Father, he was raised through the 'glory of the Father,' then eschatological faith in the cross of Jesus Christ must acknowledge the theological

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punishment fit the nature of the crime] – in order to proclaim the kingdom of freedom through joy in God's righteousness of grace, and to anticipate it by demonstrating it," *Crucified God*, 143.

<sup>75</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 144.

<sup>76</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 149.

<sup>77</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 149. John Milbank argues against this abandonment within God. Milbank writes, "But Christ was never merely abandoned, even for a single instance. Even though all his friends deserted him in the garden of Gethsemane and he suffered thereby the worst extremity of human agony, he still did not endure ontological desertion. The cry of dereliction upon the cross recorded by Matthew and Mark involves no abandonment by the Father, but rather Jesus' deepest entering into the self-separation of sinful humanity from God: hence it is to God, not the Father that Jesus as Son in his humanity cries out. When, by contrast, Jesus in his divine nature speaks as the Son to the Father, it is a question of serene deliverance in contrast to the cruel human handings over: 'Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit! (Luke 23:46)," *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 98-99. However, one must question how Milbank attributes specific sayings and moods of Jesus Christ to either his divine or human nature.

trial between God and God. The cross of the Son divides God from God to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction. The resurrection of the Son abandoned by God unites God with God in the most intimate fellowship.<sup>78</sup>

It must be pointed out here that Moltmann's understanding of the cross is dependent upon the event of the resurrection. Although more will be said about this in later chapters of this thesis, for Barth, Good Friday is an event that is united but also separate and distinct from the day of resurrection, where for Moltmann, the cross is dependent upon the resurrection. This is evidenced by Moltmann's emphasis on the eschatological focus on the cross and resurrection. He states that "Only in the light of his resurrection from the dead does his death gain that special, unique saving significance which it cannot achieve otherwise, even in light of the life he lived."<sup>79</sup> It is essential to understand what is salvific in the events of the cross and resurrection for Moltmann. He writes:

Only Christ's representative suffering and sacrifice 'for them' in his death on the cross brings hope to the hopeless, future to those who are passing away and new right to the unrighteous ... In his dying for us the risen Christ looks on us and draws us into his life. In the one who became poor for our sake, God's riches are opened up for us.<sup>80</sup>

Moltmann argues that it is the *suffering* of the abandoned Jesus Christ that makes his death salvific. "As the crucified one, the risen Christ is there 'for all.' In the cross of the Son of God, in his abandonment by God, the 'crucified' God is the human God of all godless men and those who have been abandoned by God."<sup>81</sup> Throughout this thesis Moltmann's writings about the event of the cross and his emphasis on the suffering and abandonment of Jesus Christ will be analysed in light of Barth's writings about reconciliation through the judgement upon human disobedience and sin during the event of the cross.

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<sup>78</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 152. Note the Moltmann fails to mention the role of the Holy Spirit in his triune understanding of the event of the cross. This omission will be discussed later.

<sup>79</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 182.

<sup>80</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 186.

<sup>81</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 195. Robert Jenson holds a similar view which places priority on the resurrection. Jenson writes, "Theologians have too often constructed their systems as if Christ fully accomplished our salvation at Golgotha, and was raised only because, being immortal God, he could not remain dead, or as the consequence for the human Jesus of what he did on the cross," *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 179. This view leads to Jenson's understanding that "A doctrine of God's saving action in the Crucifixion can be created with no other premises than that the Crucifixion indeed brings Jesus' life to its end and that it is God who ordains the particular end," 181. Jenson fails to understand the salvific significance of Jesus Christ's death as stated by Barth which is made possible because the death of Jesus Christ involves the full reality of God's judgement upon the sins of humanity, and occurs because Jesus Christ is God incarnate and eternally elects to bear this judgement.

## **Section Two-**

### **The Judge Judged in Our Place**

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Triune God and the Cross: Jesus Christ Takes our Place**

This chapter explores the first part of Barth's fourfold articulation of how reconciliation occurs when the Judge becomes the judged. Barth states that "Jesus Christ was and is 'for us' in that He took our place as Judge."<sup>1</sup> First, this chapter will analyse the role and purpose of the Judge. Then it will explore the identity of the Judge as described in Barth's doctrine of the Trinity with reference to Hegel and Moltmann. Finally, this chapter will discuss Barth's doctrine of election in order to discern why it was necessary, for Barth, that the Judge became the judged.

#### **A. The role of the Judge**

Barth begins by explaining that Jesus Christ was and is "for us" in that he took our place as the Judge. Men and women attempt to judge themselves as innocent and pronounce themselves as free of guilt and sin. Barth states, "To be a man means in practice to want to be a judge, to want to be able and competent to pronounce ourselves free and righteous and others more or less guilty."<sup>2</sup> He refers to Genesis 3 and the Garden of Eden narrative where humanity sins by being disobedient in its quest to understand good and evil. When Jesus Christ becomes the Judge, he takes the place of every human. Barth explains, "What we want to do for ourselves has been taken out of our hands by Him."<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ "is not only over us – a final court which we must finally remember and respect. He is radically and totally for us, in our place."<sup>4</sup> This has two consequences for men and women. First, it means that men and women face a crisis when they understand they are no longer their own judge. Their false sense of control is gone and now they must face the reality that God is their judge. "He who has acted there as Judge will also judge me, and He and not I will judge others."<sup>5</sup> However, for Barth, this crisis leads to the second consequence which is liberation and hope. Because it is "an intolerable nuisance" to have the responsibility of being the one who judges and provides sentences, men and women are freed because "it has

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<sup>1</sup> IV/1, 231.

<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 231.

<sup>3</sup> IV/1, 232.

<sup>4</sup> IV/1, 232.

<sup>5</sup> IV/1, 233.

come to pass in Jesus Christ that we are deposed and dismissed from this office because He has come to exercise it in our place.”<sup>6</sup>

Barth elaborates the understanding of Jesus Christ as the Judge of humanity by mentioning that Jesus Christ fulfils the role of the Old Testament concept of Judge.

The so-called ‘Judges’ of the Old Testament in the early period of the occupation of Canaan are described as men awakened by God and their main office is to be helpers and saviours in the recurrent sufferings of the people at the hand of neighbouring tribes. It was only in addition to this activity in ‘foreign affairs’ that they engaged in judging the narrower sense of the term. Similarly in the New Testament – a fact which was later forgotten – the coming of the Judge means basically the coming of the Redeemer and Saviour.<sup>7</sup>

The triune God judges the sins of humanity in and through the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, who becomes human in order to become the judged One. After commenting on the Old Testament notion of judge, Barth looks to the New Testament gospels and the epistle to the Romans to articulate Jesus Christ’s role as Judge of humanity.

The role of John the Baptist is important in proclaiming the appearance of Jesus Christ at Judge. According to Barth, “The baptism of John is ... the sign of penitent expectation of the Judge and his *dies irae* [day of wrath]. And it is to this baptism that Jesus of Nazareth submits, having come to Jordan from Galilee and accepting it with all the people. He does so as the Judge who has been proclaimed.”<sup>8</sup> For Barth, the role of Jesus Christ as the judge of humanity occurs throughout the gospel of John.

We find the same teaching again and again in the Gospel of St. John. Here the concept of judgement is explicitly used, and there is a distinctive correlation of the judicial decision which has yet to be revealed with the decision which is in fact already being made: ‘He that believeth not in the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him’ (John 3:36).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 234.

<sup>7</sup> IV/1, 217.

<sup>8</sup> IV/1, 218.

<sup>9</sup> IV/1, 218. John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath.” Barth also quotes the following passages as support of Jesus Christ’s role of Judge. “The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge,” (John 12:48). “The Father judges no one but has given all judgement to the Son” ... “He [God] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man,” (John 5: 22, 27). “I [Jesus Christ] can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just, because I seek the will of him who sent me,” (John 5:30). “Yet, even if I do judge, my judgement is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me,” (John 8:16).

Barth appeals to other passages in the New Testament where Jesus Christ is called a judge and considers the beginning of Romans as a significant passage which describes Jesus Christ as the judge of men and women.<sup>10</sup> According to Barth:

The *locus classicus* for this significance and function of Jesus Christ as the Judge, and therefore for the judicial work of the Gospel concerning Him, is the whole sequence from Romans 1:18-3:20 ... What follows [Barth's doctrine of reconciliation] can be understood only if we see that He has this aspect. He would not be who He is, nor would He do what, as the Son of God who has come to us, He does do for us, if He were not this Judge who pronounces against us.<sup>11</sup>

Barth explains the significance of Jesus Christ being the judge of humanity:

It is decisively because this Judge is the measure of all righteousness, because any right which man might seek apart from Him or set up and assert side by side with Him could only be wrong, because conversely any right being or action on the part of men can consist only in His bowing before the judgement of this Judge and recognising and accepting His sentence as just whatever it may be.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus Christ comes to judge men and women and, as a result of the judgement that occurred with Jesus Christ's death upon the cross, reconciliation between God and the world occurs. Barth explicitly articulates this at the beginning of this section:

Why did the Son of God become man, one of us, our brother, our fellow in the human situation? The answer is: In order to judge the world. But in light of what God has actually done we must add at once: In order to judge it in the exercise of His kingly freedom to show His grace in the execution of His judgement, to pronounce us free in passing sentence, to free us by imprisoning us, to ground our life on our death, to redeem and save us by our destruction. That is how God actually judged in Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus Christ was "for us" in that he is our judge against us. "That is what happened when the divine accusation was, as it were, embodied in His presence in the flesh. That is what happened when the divine condemnation had, as it were, visibly to fall upon this our fellow-man."<sup>14</sup> The sins of the world are judged by the event of the cross. Barth expounds this judgment:

because God willed to execute His judgement on us in His Son it all happened in His person, as His accusation and condemnation and destruction. He judged, and it was the Judge who was judged, who let Himself be judged. Because He was a man like us, He was able to be judged like us. Because He was the Son of God and Himself God, He

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<sup>10</sup> Barth quotes the following passages as support on IV/1, 219: "While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead," (Acts 17:30-31). "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead," (Acts 10:42). "For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil," (2 Cor. 5:10). "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent," (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

<sup>11</sup> IV/1, 219.

<sup>12</sup> IV/1, 219.

<sup>13</sup> IV/1, 222.

<sup>14</sup> IV/1, 222.



had the competence and power to allow this to happen to Him. Because He was the divine Judge come amongst us, He had the authority ... to exercise the divine justice of grace, to pronounce us righteous on the ground of what happened to Him, to free us therefore from the accusation and condemnation and punishment, to save us from the impending loss and destruction.<sup>15</sup>

The role of Jesus Christ as the judge of humanity is not a joyful responsibility.

Barth states that Jesus Christ:

has no pleasure in His being and activity as Judge. It is only the more bitter sorrow that He takes to Himself. And the world lives by the fact that He does give Himself to bear this sorrow for it and with it and in its place ... because He bears it for us ... as the sorrow of the Judge right is really done and the wrong done away with.<sup>16</sup>

The biblical witness proclaims Jesus Christ as the Judge, and because of his righteous judgement, by the grace of God, men and women receive salvation.

The Gospel itself is the revelation of this Judge, the event in which He comes forth and pronounces His sentence as God's judicial sentence against which there can be no appeal. And redemption consists in the fact that this takes place. The one who is justified by faith, who receives the sentence of this Judge, trusting that it is valid and right, who subjects himself to it in obedience, will live, will partake of redemption.<sup>17</sup>

This is how Jesus Christ is "for us" in the event of the cross. Jesus Christ, the Judge, becomes the judged one in our place.

In order to understand how Jesus Christ is both the Judge and the judged one, Barth's doctrine of the Trinity must be examined. The triune God is both the subject and object of reconciliation and it must be understood how the triune God wills and acts to restore the covenant in order to understand how Jesus Christ is "for us" in the event of the cross. Barth explains:

The death of Jesus Christ was, of course, wholly and altogether the work of God to the extent that it is the judgement of death fulfilled on the Representative of all other men appointed by God. The way to the cross and death in which this judgment took place is indeed the work of the Son of God obedient in humility ... As the judgement of God, the event at Golgotha is exclusively the work of God.<sup>18</sup>

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is founded upon the free and obedient eternal action of the triune God. As an event of God, the event of the cross is an event that the triune God participates in, not just the Father and the Son. John Thompson explains that:

The significance of the Son's suffering in relation to the Father and his involvement by the Spirit in the death of Jesus has ultimate significance for the nature of God as triune. Barth can give a place to the participation of the Father in the Son's suffering since he wills for Christ the path of humiliation and obedience and accompanies him on it.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> IV/1, 222-223.

<sup>16</sup> IV/1, 453.

<sup>17</sup> IV/1, 393.

<sup>18</sup> IV/1, 300. Barth mentions human action in the event of the cross: "Its [event of the cross] fulfilment is ordained by God even in detail. But at the same time it has a component of human action – both obedient and good on the one hand and disobedient and evil on the other," 300.

<sup>19</sup> John Thompson, "Christology and Reconciliation in the Theology of Karl Barth," in *Christ in Our Place*, eds. Trevor Hart and Daniel Thimell (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989), 215-216.

Understanding the unity, differentiation, freedom, and obedience within the modes of being of the Trinity is essential to understanding the reconciliation that occurred.

It is interesting to point out Jürgen Moltmann's writing concerning the triune God acting as Judge. In *The Spirit of Life* Moltmann writes of the Spirit acting as judge, not Jesus Christ. Moltmann writes of the Spirit with very anthropomorphic examples that concern situations of injustice on earth. Moltmann states that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of righteousness that "can be sensed *in the pain of the people without rights ... speaks in the guilty conscience of the people who commit violence ... [and] is the presence of Christ among and in the victims of violence.*"<sup>20</sup> This two-page section titled "The Spirit as Judge" focuses on how men and women who experience violence or injustice may be comforted by God and how those who commit harmful acts may experience guilt. This is in stark contrast to Barth's understanding of Jesus Christ's role of Judge that accomplishes reconciliation by bearing the judgement of God.

In order to understand Barth's description of Jesus Christ as the Judge and understand how reconciliation occurred with this specific death, the remainder of this chapter will explore the event of the cross as it relates to Barth's doctrines of the Trinity and election. According to Barth, revelation of the triune God is mediated through God's works and actions. "God is who He is in His works."<sup>21</sup> Humanity witnesses the acts of the triune God in the creation of the world, the incarnation of the Word and the restoration of the fellowship with God in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The doctrine of the Trinity is the necessary starting place for analysing the reconciling death of Jesus Christ on the cross. According to Richard Roberts:

the act of God in Jesus Christ unites the Godward and trinitarian dimension of the divine being with the expression of that being towards man and in history in the doctrines of creation and reconciliation. The Trinity is, in Barth's theology, the divine being in revealing action: God is in Trinity insofar as he is in Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Roberts argues that "It is only upon the basis of the realisation of the global ontological and epistemological role of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity as the ostensible explication of God's act of revelation that the reader may proceed

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<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 142-143.

<sup>21</sup> II/1, 260.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Roberts, *A Theology on its Way?* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 83.

without misconceptions to examine the burgeoning theological ornamentation of his work.”<sup>23</sup>

## B. The Identity of the Judge and Barth’s Doctrine of the Trinity

A brief discussion of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity through Barth’s career is necessary to comprehend how he articulates the Trinity in the doctrine of reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV. The understanding that God’s self-revelation is the foundation of human knowledge of God is present in Barth’s earliest writings. Timothy Gorringer states that:

the first edition [of *The Epistle to the Romans*] spoke of the immediate knowledge of God, but now [in the second edition] Barth has learned from Kierkegaard that ‘to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol.’<sup>24</sup>

Between Barth’s first (1919) and second (1922) editions of *The Epistle to the Romans*, he develops this idea of the unknowability of God outside of the self-revelation of God. In the second edition Barth emphasizes that the historical human Jesus Christ only bears witness to the divine Godhead, but is not revelation himself:

we encounter in Jesus the scandal of an eternal revelation ... Because God is eternal and omnipotent, He is unique and once-for-all. To this, Jesus, the Christ, the eternal Christ, bears witness.<sup>25</sup>

Gorringer analyzes Barth’s understanding of Jesus Christ from the *Romans* commentary: “The human historical Jesus bears witness to God, but is not himself revelation. The unveiling which remains a veiling is our knowledge of Christ in cross and resurrection.”<sup>26</sup> Revelation of God was founded upon the event of the cross during this early stage of Barth’s theological development. According to McCormack, in *Romans* II:

the event of the cross and it alone is the place where the Unintuitable becomes intuitable. God becomes intuitable only *sub specie mortis* [under the appearance of

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<sup>23</sup> Roberts, *A Theology on its Way?* 90.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Gorringer, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59, quoting *The Epistle to the Romans*, 422.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, tr. from the 6<sup>th</sup> ed. by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 277.

<sup>26</sup> Gorringer, *Against Hegemony*, 60. During this period of Barth’s life in post-WWI Europe, Barth was engaged in doctrinal debates against peers concerning the historical Jesus and the knowability of the transcendent. Gorringer writes, “With an eye on the Jesus of liberal theology he [Barth] denies that the personality of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, the miracles, all the details of Christ’s life, neither immediate nor the eschatological side of the gospel, exist in their own right. ‘All is illumined by the light which proceeds from his death,’” *Against Hegemony*, 60, quoting *The Epistle to the Romans*, 159.

death]. In faith, 'the death [of Christ] becomes the only (the only!) parable of the Kingdom of God.'<sup>27</sup>

McCormack explains how the event of the cross reveals God to humanity:

Paradoxically, in Jesus' death in God-abandonment on the cross, God is fully present, faithful even unto hell. It is here, in the wholly negative experience of this one human being, that God gives Himself to be known ... Where the veil is lifted – or better, made to be *transparent*, for Jesus' death in God-abandonment never ceases to be a veil – where this occurs, there God is known. In the dialectic of veiling and unveiling which occurs in the cross and resurrection, Barth sees the actualization of a relationship of correspondence between the hidden God and the death of this man in God-abandonment. God is revealed as the God who shows His faithfulness to the human race in the negation of every last temporal possibility up to and including death itself.<sup>28</sup>

It is the event of the cross where humanity knows the triune God as both the judge and the judged one. It is the event of the cross of Jesus Christ that is the event where God's self-disclosure is made possible to women and men, because McCormack states that, for Barth, "the being of God is self-determined being; it is a being which God gives to himself in the primal decision in which he determines himself for this gracious relation to humankind."<sup>29</sup> This is possible for Barth because of what Webster describes as "Barth's theological realism." Webster explains that, "Christian faith and theology are 'realist' in the sense that they testify to an absolute act of divine self-positing, in whose self-establishing veracity they participate by grace."<sup>30</sup> Revelation of God is possible, according to Barth, because the self-revelation of God reveals the reality of God through Jesus Christ, particularly through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. McCormack states that "Barth proposed to work in an a posteriori fashion, beginning not with a general concept of God or a general concept of human being but with a most highly concrete reality, Jesus Christ."<sup>31</sup>

In his lectures at the University of Göttingen during 1924-1925, Barth recognized the importance of beginning theological discourse with the doctrine of the Trinity. Gorringer explains that:

His placing of the Trinity at the head of dogmatic reflection was ... fundamentally new. Barth's insistence on the 'inalienable subjectivity' of God was directed against

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<sup>27</sup> Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 254, quoting from *Der Römerbrief*, 1922, 182.

<sup>28</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 255. McCormack explains the role of the cross and the resurrection according to Barth, "Where the veil is lifted by God's gracious decision and act, where the light shines forth from the resurrection makes clear the meaning of this man's death, there the event of the cross does indeed become *the* parable of the Kingdom," 255.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce McCormack, "The Sum of the Gospel: The Doctrine of Election in the Theologies of Alexander Schweizer and Karl Barth," *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, eds. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 489.

<sup>30</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 27.

<sup>31</sup> McCormack, "The Sum of the Gospel," 488.

either the divinizing of human beings – as in the Jesus centred piety of Lutheranism – or the humanizing of God, the true direction of liberal Protestantism, revealed in Feuerbach.<sup>32</sup>

For Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity was important as the basis for articulating Christian theology. Later in 1932, Barth began the *Church Dogmatics* with the doctrine of the Trinity because, according to Alan Torrance:

the triune God requires to be affirmed not only as the essential Subject-matter of theological discourse, but as the essential condition of its actuality and possibility. The Trinity constitutes both the ontic and the noetic basis of the Word revealed and defines, therefore, the whole compass – the beginning and end – of the theological task.<sup>33</sup>

For Barth, humanity comes to know God only through God's self-revelation.

*a. the connection between the doctrine of revelation and the Trinity*

Early in his career Barth was involved in the theological debate summarised by Rudolf Bultmann's 1925 essay titled, "What does it mean to speak of God?" Barth argued that humanity can speak of God based on the trinitarian disclosure of the self-revealed knowledge of God by the person and work of Jesus Christ, as attested by the Holy Spirit. It is important to note the significance of the debate surrounding the Trinity and its historical roots. T. F. Torrance explains:

What Karl Barth found to be at stake in the twentieth century was nothing less than the downright Godness of God in his Revelation, for the Augustinian, Cartesian and Newtonian dualism built into the general framework of Western thought and culture had the effect of cutting back into the preaching and teaching of the Church in such a way as to damage, and sometimes even sever, the ontological bond between Jesus Christ and God the Father, and thus to introduce an oblique or symbolical relation between the Word of God and God himself.<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, in *Church Dogmatics* volume I, the doctrines of revelation and the Trinity are addressed together. Webster argues that "What Barth has to say about the doctrine of the Trinity is thus inseparable from what he has to say about the doctrine of revelation, since revelation (itself the foundation of dogmatics) is nothing other than the self-revelation of Father, Son and Spirit."<sup>35</sup> In the event of

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<sup>32</sup> Gorringe, *Against Hegemony*, 103.

<sup>33</sup> Alan Torrance, "The Trinity," ed. John Webster in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 74.

<sup>34</sup> T. F. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," in *SJT*, 39 (1986), 463. Looking back at historical controversies, Torrance explains, "The Western Church, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, had always acknowledged the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and had thus officially rejected the Arian heresy. Throughout the centuries, however, it had become infected from below with subtle forms of anthropological and epistemological dualism, so that the habit of thinking in terms of real internal relations constantly tended to be replaced with Arian-like habits of thinking in terms of external, symbolical or merely moral relations, which resulted in a serious loss of direct contact with reality," 464-465.

<sup>35</sup> John Webster, *Barth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London: Continuum, 2000), 58. Webster goes on to comment about criticisms that concern Barth's uniting of these two doctrines: "The core problem, on some accounts, is the proximity of the doctrines of the Trinity and revelation. By expounding



the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross, Barth explains that God is revealed as a triune God. Barth emphasizes the self-revealed unity of the Trinity in three ways of being. At the beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* Barth states that, "The God who reveals Himself according to Scripture is One in three distinct modes of being subsisting in their mutual relations: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."<sup>36</sup> Each mode of being [*Seinsweise*] revealed to humanity is essential to God's eternal being. Barth explains:

In all three modes of being God is the one God both in Himself and in relation to the world and man. But this one God is God three times in different ways, so different that it is only in this threefold difference that He is God, so different that this difference, this being in these three modes of being, is absolutely essential to Him, so different, then, that this difference is irremovable.<sup>37</sup>

Barth uses the term "triunity" to describe the "unity in trinity and trinity in unity."<sup>38</sup> Humanity understands this unity and three-ness through the mediated witness of God's action. "The work of God is the essence of God as the essence of Him who ... is revealer, revelation and being revealed, or Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. In this work of His, God is revealed to us."<sup>39</sup> In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV Barth states that this work of the triune God is revealed to humanity in the event of the cross:

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them together, Barth seems to lock himself into a conception of God as a single, self-revealing subject, thereby making it acutely difficult to talk of the triune plurality of God," 70. Webster cautions against rushing to criticisms of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity because, "In one very important sense, the whole of the *Church Dogmatics* is a doctrine of the Trinity, both in its architectural conception and in its specific content, and criticisms of his explicit exposition of the divine triunity sometimes need to be set in the light of what happens elsewhere," 72.

<sup>36</sup> I/1, 348. In the *Church Dogmatics* Barth begins his discourse with the doctrine of the Trinity (in vol. I/1-chapter 2) and the doctrine of Scripture follows later (in vol. I/2-chapter 3). Barth rejects the traditional ordering of first discussing the doctrine of Scripture and then turning to the Trinity, and follows Peter Lombard and Bonaventure. Otto Weber explains why Barth's ordering is important: "The widespread objection that the Doctrine of the Trinity is 'speculative' and that it may not be placed at the beginning in order to secure dogmatics against speculation, is wrong. It is precisely the Doctrine of the Trinity which can help to guard dogmatics from this speculation," *Foundation of Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 351-352. Weber continues, "The Church Doctrine of the Trinity is in its essence the attempt to preserve as one the unity and the revelation of God dogmatically. It is (1) directed against the attempt to assume that there is a gradation of the divine within God, and it is (2) opposed to any attempt to understand revelation only as the differentiated and unreal self-representation of God who silently remains behind it." *Foundation of Dogmatics*, 370. Defending his positioning of the doctrine of the Trinity in the beginning of his *Dogmatics* Barth writes, "The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation," I/1, 301.

<sup>37</sup> I/1, 360. Against critics who dislike the terminology, Iain Taylor argues that Barth's use of the term *Seinsweise* "to refer to the trinitarian persons is not in any way a departure from the traditional doctrine," in "In Defence of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity," in *IJST*, 5:1 (2003), 33.

<sup>38</sup> I/1, 368.

<sup>39</sup> I/1, 371.



It is the justification of Jesus Christ and our justification and therefore God's own justification in virtue of which life has actually come from his death – the life of Jesus Christ, and our life in Him. We have thought of the resurrection as the work of grace of God the Father. But this work of grace is wholly and utterly the answer to the work of the obedience of the Son fulfilled in His self-offering to death. This work of grace and this work of obedience as the act of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one work.<sup>40</sup>

The events of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are the work of the triune God. It is also through the work of the triune God that humanity comes to know the self-revealed God. Webster notes Barth's emphasis in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*: "Revelation and its reception proceed alike from the triune God, and so coming to understand how God is known involves nothing more than following the path which is already indicated by the doctrine of the Trinity."<sup>41</sup>

In his exposition of revelation, Barth draws upon the theology of Anselm. Colin Gunton states, "It is Barth's application to the history of Jesus of Nazareth of what he learned from Anselm: that God authenticates his reality by what he does here. Something happens. It is God; it happens at the initiative of God; it communicates its reality to men of a certain time and place."<sup>42</sup> Based on the historical reality of Jesus Christ, Barth believes that humanity can know God because God freely gives of Godself in revelation to humanity.<sup>43</sup>

Eberhard Jüngel states that for Barth, "God is subject, predicate and object of the event of revelation."<sup>44</sup> Because human knowledge of God is based upon the divine self-revelation, humanity can come to know the triune God, as God corresponds to Godself. Jüngel argues, "The self-relatedness of God's being makes possible God's self-interpretation. God *reveals* himself as Father, Son and

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<sup>40</sup> IV/1, 342-343.

<sup>41</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 62. Kurt Anders Richardson explains that "Objective knowledge of God – as we have it given to us in 'the doctrine of the Trinity, and ultimately and decisively by Holy Scripture as the source and norm' – must be given to us, to be subjectively known by us in a creative action of God the Holy Spirit on us and in us," *Reading Karl Barth: New Directions for North American Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 165, quoting I/2, 204.

<sup>42</sup> Colin Gunton, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election as Part of His Doctrine of God," in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. XXV:2 (1974), 386. John Webster agrees with the influence of Anselm on Barth concerning his views on revelation, in *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Barth firmly insisted upon revelation as the self-revealed Word of God as witnessed through the work and person of Jesus Christ. Gorringer explains, "As opposed to natural theology Barth wants to insist that 'the Word of God' is the proper source and theme of theology ... Barth argues that natural theology puts in place of the objective liberating biblical God the illusory abstraction of speculative being. As in the Romans commentary, Barth regards abstraction as the original sin in theology for it represents a failure of engagement with theology's real object," *Against Hegemony*, 133. The debate over revelation and natural theology was more than a scholastic argument among theologians as it had a significant impact on Barth's opposition to the Nazi regime and his formulation of the Barmen Confession.

<sup>44</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, tr. John Webster (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 28.

Spirit because he *is* God as Father, Son and Spirit.”<sup>45</sup> The economic Trinity is revealed to humans through the action of the triune God and corresponds to the eternal immanent Trinity of Godself.<sup>46</sup> God is Lord of the event of revelation and it is by the grace of God and the witness of the Spirit that humanity comes to understand the triunity of God. According to Jüngel, “The gracious provenience of God’s being-as-object over against the human person who knows God consists in the fact that, in distinction from all other objects, God in his freedom *makes* himself object for us, *gives* himself to be known.”<sup>47</sup> Human knowledge of the “God with us” is possible although it is dependent on the self-revelation of the triune God who wills to be known by men and women.

In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/3 Barth states that Jesus Christ, as the Word of God, is the speech of God to men and women. The Word of God as

the crucified Jesus Christ is distinguished from all other human words as God’s Word by the fact that it is spoken out of the great, conclusive and absolute silence in which all the words of all other men reach their end and limit, namely, the silence of the death of this man.<sup>48</sup>

Barth argues that “God alone as the only Lord of life and death can break this silence, and therefore speak out of this end and limit of all human words ... But

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<sup>45</sup> Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Molnar is critical of Moltmann, Jüngel and others who have been influenced by Barth yet accept Rahner’s axiom that the immanent and economic trinity are identical. He argues, “By accepting this axiom, however, they actually stand opposed to Barth’s most basic theological insight, namely, that ‘a deliberate and sharp distinction between the Trinity of God as we may know it in the Word of God revealed, written and proclaimed, and God’s immanent Trinity’ ... must be maintained in order to avoid confusing and reversing the role of Creator in relation to creature both theoretically and practically,” in “The Function of the Immanent Trinity in the Theology of Karl Barth,” in *SJT*, 42:3 (1989), 367, quoting Barth, I/1, 172. Molnar notes that Barth rarely uses the expression ‘immanent Trinity’ in the *Church Dogmatics* and does not identify, separate or synthesize the immanent and economic Trinity, because uncritically defining the immanent and economic Trinity as identical compromises God’s freedom. Molnar posits, “Barth’s method of *faith seeking understanding* preserved his insight that the immanent and economic trinity could not be identified or confused but distinguished and united in such a way analogous to the Incarnate Logos,” in “The Function of the Immanent Trinity,” 369-370. Molnar’s fears concerning the freedom of God could be addressed if he employed volume IV and articulated Barth’s understanding of the Trinity from Barth’s most developed theology. In volume IV Barth addresses the act of God “for us” in Jesus Christ and describes the Incarnate Logos. Unfortunately, Molnar relies upon volume I most significantly in his writings about Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity and only occasionally refers to volume II, and rarely to volume IV. This thesis demonstrates that in freedom, God elects to be with and for humanity in Jesus Christ and that God Self-reveals this free action in the event of the cross.

<sup>47</sup> Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 61. Joseph Mangina states that for Barth, “There is no God ‘behind’ the cross. There is only one God on the cross,” *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 158. Mangina is right to point out that these sentences must not be misunderstood. He clarifies, “Barth denies the *logos asarkos* as an *actual* person; ‘Jesus Christ’ for him always means the God-man. Yet the *logos asarkos* still serves an important role as a theological placeholder, maintaining God’s freedom in relation to the economy of salvation,” 163.

<sup>48</sup> IV/3, 410.

the crucified, dead and buried man Jesus Christ does speak. Those that hear Him, hear God.”<sup>49</sup>

Humanity comes to know God as God speaks through the crucified Jesus Christ. But how does God speak through the crucified Christ? McCormack states that, for Barth, the self-revelation of God occurs through the witness of scripture made possible by the *Realdialektik* of the divine veiling and unveiling. McCormack states that:

Barth makes it quite clear that if revelation is *Self-revelation* (and it is), then revelation means the revelation of God in His entirety – *but* the whole being of God *hidden* in a creaturely veil. Nothing of God is known directly; He remains altogether hidden. And yet, where God is truly known in His hiddenness, it is the whole of God which is known there and not ‘part’ of Him.<sup>50</sup>

McCormack explains that:

For us, knowledge of God occurs when and where God takes up the language of the biblical witness and bears witness to Himself in and through its witness (the objective movement) *and* awakens in us the faith needed to comprehend the witness (the subjective moment). In that this occurs, a relation of correspondence (the so-called *analogia fidei*) is established (actualistically!) between God’s knowledge of Himself and human knowledge of Him.<sup>51</sup>

Although revelation of God may occur, Barth maintains there are limits to this knowledge and that God is always hidden, even when God is revealed. Hart argues that:

There is a principle within us which must first be overcome, a breach which must be healed before God can draw us into the circle of his own self-knowing. For the ‘knowledge’ which Barth insists can and does take place, even though it is impossible that it should, is not an objectifying ‘knowledge about’; even though it exists within a precise conceptual and verbal matrix, it is above all a self-involving and self-transforming communion with God as personal Other.<sup>52</sup>

This encounter with the Other is regarded by Barth as a miracle. Barth writes that revelation “will remain a miracle to all eternity of completed redemption.”<sup>53</sup> This

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<sup>49</sup> IV/3, 410-411. Moltmann holds the same revelatory view of the cross. He states, “In concrete terms, God is revealed in the cross of Christ who was abandoned by God. His grace is revealed to sinners. His righteousness is revealed in the unrighteous and in those without rights, and his gracious election in the damned,” *Crucified God*, 27. God can be known to men and women through the specific event of the cross because, according to Moltmann, the “epistemological principle of the theology of the cross can only be revealed in this dialectic principle: the deity of God is revealed in the paradox of the cross,” *Crucified God*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce McCormack, “Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings of Barth: Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology,” *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 13:1 (1997), 68. McCormack explains the implications of this, “The principal consequence of this conception of an indirect revelation for theological epistemology is that God is the Subject of the knowledge of God. Human beings can only know God by being given a knowledge which corresponds to God’s Self-knowledge,” 68.

<sup>51</sup> McCormack, “Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings,” 69-70.

<sup>52</sup> Trevor Hart, “Revelation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 42.

<sup>53</sup> I/2, 245.

miracle is possible only through God's self-revealing action, through which God is revealed, yet always remains hidden. According to Hart, "That God's gracious action in the Word and Spirit wholly envelopes and penetrates our action (and makes ours possible in doing so) does not, therefore, imply any loss of the difference between human and divine, created and uncreated."<sup>54</sup> This brings up the question of the role of the human in the process of revelation.

If revelation is made possible only through the miracle of God's self-revelation, what role do men and women have in the event of revelation? Webster argues that, "from the very beginning, Barth's theme is God and humanity as agents in relation."<sup>55</sup> Humanity is not overwhelmed and completely overpowered by the divine self-revelation. Webster states that, "Even at the furthest reaches of his protest against anthropocentric reduction of God to a function of human piety, consciousness or moral projects, Barth is attempting to safeguard not only the axiomatic divinity of God, but also the authenticity of the creature."<sup>56</sup> Barth writes that it would be wrong

to understand the situation of man in the experience of God's Word as an elimination of his self-determination or as a state of partial or total receptivity ... If God is seriously involved in experience of the Word of God, then man is just as seriously as involved too. The very man who stands in real knowledge of the Word of God also knows himself as existing in the act of his life, as existing in his self-determination.<sup>57</sup>

But not every man and woman experience God's self-revelation. According to Hart:

God chooses to whom he will make himself known. His self-disclosure is apparent to some and remains wholly hidden from others. To these others, to whom the gift of faith is not yet granted, the media or vehicles of God's self-objectifying remain opaque, veiling God rather than disclosing him.<sup>58</sup>

McCormack explains how revelation and election are united in Barth and how the two influence the lives of men and women:

The election of an individual has already been decided in Jesus Christ. What is decided in the revelation-event is not whether the individual is elect or not, but whether she

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<sup>54</sup> Hart, "Revelation," 49.

<sup>55</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 33. Webster also defends Barth's doctrine of revelation from critics who think it places too much emphasis on the action of God. "[C]riticism is miscalculated because it neglects the overall structure of Barth's argument as a whole in *Church Dogmatics* I/2, whose aim is to demonstrate that the objective and subjective are inseparable precisely because of the directness of revelation to human being and action ... Because of (not despite) the fact that the self-revealing triune God is all in all, humanity is liberated to be truly itself," *Karl Barth*, 64.

<sup>56</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 33.

<sup>57</sup> I/1, 200.

<sup>58</sup> Hart, "Revelation," 47.



will respond to her election as one who is elect (and, therefore, on the basis of the truth of her existence) or as one who is reprobate (and, therefore on the basis of a lie).<sup>59</sup>

Men and women are not forcefully overpowered by God in the event of God's self-revelation. Barth explains, "Not God alone, but God and man together constitute the content of the Word of God attested in Scripture."<sup>60</sup> This statement concerning the togetherness of God and humanity, Webster explains, "takes us near the heart of what Barth is about in his various accounts of the Spirit: the relation between God and humanity is fundamental, in that God is what he is in this relationship."<sup>61</sup> It is evident here how Barth connects the doctrine of the Trinity to the doctrine of revelation and humanity's knowledge of God, and how he upholds the importance of the role of individual men and women in the event of divine self-revelation. For Barth, the Trinity and revelation (with human knowledge of both based on the event of the cross) comprises the starting point for theological discourse as these two doctrines significantly influence other doctrines and provide the basis for theological reflection. Mangina explains:

Since the knowledge of God is simply and without remainder the knowledge of the Crucified, the Christian is freed from anxiety about the future and second-guessing of the past. He or she may simply live in the joy and gratitude that is the appropriate witness to this event.<sup>62</sup>

For Barth, knowledge of God is knowledge of a self-revealed triune God.

#### *b. Barth's use of the terms perichoresis and kenosis*

While examining the doctrine of the Trinity in *Church Dogmatics* volume I, Barth discusses the traditional debate concerning the *filioque* clause that arose

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<sup>59</sup> Bruce McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 459. McCormack explains the effect of Barth's doctrine of election on his doctrine of revelation, "Where once the revelation-events described by Barth seemed to be discrete and occasional, without any definite relationship to one another, it is now clear that they are joined together as moments in a single, unified history. The way of God with His people is a way whose meaning is grounded in God's eternal will in Jesus Christ to be gracious. The dialect of veiling and unveiling would henceforth be understood by Barth to be a 'teleologically ordered dialectic'," 459-460, quoting II/1, 236.

<sup>60</sup> I/2, 207.

<sup>61</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 37. Webster continues, "alongside the reality of 'God with us', we have to affirm the further reality of God with us', a reality which is, strictly speaking, not subordinate to the objective element 'because any subordination in principle would indirectly call into question the *homoousia* of the Holy Spirit'," 37, quoting I/2, 208. Webster explains, "At least in the light of these passages, one of the major contemporary charges against Barth's Trinitarian theology – its alleged adherence to 'the Latin, psychological model, which tends to isolate God from the drama which he initiates with man as his partner' – can be seen to be rather wide of the mark," 37, quoting the criticism of P.J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1981, 137.

<sup>62</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 159. Mangina notes that for Barth "the knowledge of God is nothing less than a person's participation in God. We must remind ourselves that 'knowledge,' as Barth construes it, is far more than simple cognition or assent. Rather, it functions as a means of displaying the intelligibility of human life as an active response to God's grace," 59.

within the church concerning the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit. Barth engages in a lengthy discussion concerning the eternal Spirit in the context of the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed and its interpretation throughout history. Barth sides with the Western tradition in the East-West divide over the issue because of its impact on the doctrine of the Trinity. Barth explains:

the reality of God which encounters us in His revelation is His reality in all the depths of eternity. This is why we have to take it so seriously precisely in His revelation. In connection with the specific doctrine of the Holy Spirit this means that He is Spirit of both the Father and the Son not just in His work *ad extra* and upon us, but that to all eternity – no limit or reservation is possible here – He is none other than the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. ‘And the Son’ means that not merely for us, but in God Himself.<sup>63</sup>

Barth posits that, “the *Filioque* expresses recognition of the communion between the Father and Son” and he describes the Holy Spirit as “the love which is the essence of the relation between these two modes of being of God.”<sup>64</sup> Barth firmly stresses the necessity for understanding the Holy Spirit in this manner because of its impact on God’s relationship with humanity. He states, “The intra-divine two-sided fellowship of the Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the basis of the fact that there is in revelation a fellowship in which not only is God there for man but in very truth ... man is also there for God.”<sup>65</sup> By understanding the Holy Spirit as proceeding from God the Father and God the Son at the beginning of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth is building the foundation upon which he will articulate how the triune God is “God with us” and how humanity can participate in its relationship “with God” because of the reconciliation that occurred through Jesus Christ and the event of the cross.

While explaining the triunity of the modes of being in God, Barth draws upon the work of John of Damascus and his explanation of *perichoresis*. Barth defines *perichoresis* as the state in which “the divine modes of being mutually condition and permeate one another so completely that one is always in the other

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<sup>63</sup> I/1, 479-480.

<sup>64</sup> I/1, 480.

<sup>65</sup> I/1, 480. This understanding of the Trinity that makes possible the relationship between God and humanity avoids some of the unwarranted criticisms against Barth’s pneumatology. For example, Rosato states that “Barth means to present the being of God as relevant for the entire scope of history; what results, however, is a conception of the Trinity as a closed triangle in a timeless realm, and not as an open circle in which man constantly participates through grace,” *The Spirit as Lord*, 135. Rosato also cautions that “to assure that the Spirit confessed in Christian theology is the Holy Spirit, that is, the Spirit of Jesus Christ who brings man the gift of unwarranted grace, Barth identifies the work of the *Spiritus Creator* with that of the *Spiritus Redemptor*,” 143. Webster rightly responds: “on the contrary: Barth’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his ethics of reconciliation is essentially concerned with the dignity, stature, and inalienable freedom of God’s human covenant partners; and that concern is not a *qualifying* of the Spirit as Christ’s self-attestation, but its inescapable *consequence*,” *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 134.



two and the other two in the one.”<sup>66</sup> This mutual participation, indwelling and self-giving occur in the eternal Godhead and must be addressed when discussing the action and work of the various modes of being. Jüngel explains that “The doctrine of *perichoresis* conceives the concrete unity of God’s being in that it thinks of the modes of the being of God as encountering one another in unrestricted participation.”<sup>67</sup> According to Barth:

In rendering obedience as He [Jesus Christ] does, He does something which, as in the case of that Lordship, only God can do. The One who in this obedience is the perfect image of the ruling God is Himself – as distinct from every human and creaturely kind – God by nature, God in His relationship to Himself, i.e., God in His mode of being as the Son in relation to God in His mode of being as the Father, One with the Father and of one essence.<sup>68</sup>

Webster makes a critical observation here:

Perichoresis stresses the unity as an event of the mutual interpenetration of the divine modes of being – though this unity is not to be thought of as some ‘essence’ behind the work of God, as if the perichoretic oneness of God were anterior to the differentiated reality of God encountered in his work in the world.<sup>69</sup>

The perichoretic harmony and unity of the three modes of being is balanced in Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity with an understanding of differentiation and appropriation. The concept of appropriation recognises and preserves the differentiation among the modes of being. Jüngel explains:

The *unity* of the three modes of God’s being proves itself as concrete unity when it preserves the differentiation of the three modes of being as *concrete* differentiation. As this takes place, the concrete unity articulates itself in oneness with the concrete differentiation of the modes of God’s being, to form *harmony as the concreteness* of God’s being.<sup>70</sup>

Barth understands the self-revelation of God to include God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit acting in perichoretic unity, freedom and love, through which revelation is mediated in the works of the three differentiated modes of being.<sup>71</sup> Obedience is a primary element in the three modes of being that occur in the eternal life of the God who wills to be “with us.” Jüngel argues:

We said that the unity of God’s three modes of being proves itself to be *concrete* unity when it preserves the *differentiation* of the three modes of being as *concrete*

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<sup>66</sup> I/1, 370.

<sup>67</sup> Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> IV/1, 208-209.

<sup>69</sup> John Webster, “Translator’s Introduction” to Eberhard Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, xv.

<sup>70</sup> Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 49.

<sup>71</sup> Barth expresses the unity of the three modes of being in the Trinity as they relate to their unique status in relation to each other. Barth recognizes the distinctiveness between God the Creator, “our Father because He is so antecedently in Himself as the Father of the Son,” I/1, 384, and God the Son “who has come to us [as] the Word of God that has been spoken to us, because He is so antecedently in Himself as the Son or Word of God the Father,” I/1, 399, and God the Holy Spirit “by receiving whom we become the children of God, because as the Spirit of the love of God the Father and the Son, He is so antecedently in Himself,” I/1, 448.

differentiation. This *concrete* differentiation is preserved in that Barth differentiates the Son from the Father in the mode of being of *obedience*.<sup>72</sup>

Humanity witnesses obedience as a characteristic of the eternal modes of being within the triune Godhead as exhibited through the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is the self-giving love and obedience of God in Jesus Christ that reveals Godself to men and women and reconciles humanity through the incarnate “God with us.”

Barth continues to explore the relationship between the modes of being in the Trinity, specifically the relation between God the Father and Jesus Christ incarnate, through the concept of kenosis. He discusses the problems with traditional theories of kenosis and rejects the widely held understanding of kenosis as a self-emptying and a renunciation. Instead Barth argues that “in addition to His form in the likeness of God He could also – and this involves at once a making poor, a humiliation, a condescension, and to that extent a κένωσις – take the form of a servant.”<sup>73</sup> Barth maintains that God chose to become incarnate and humbly go to the far country to reconcile humanity in obedience without ceasing to be God. God “could be obedient even to death, even to the death of the cross. He had this other possibility: the possibility of divine self-giving to the being and fate of man. He had the freedom for this condescension, for this concealment of His Godhead.”<sup>74</sup> Kenosis is evident in the action when God wills be “with us,” to enter humanity and obediently suffer unto death, while not ceasing to be God. According to Barth, “It [God’s self-emptying] does not consist in ceasing to be Himself as man, but in taking it upon Himself to be Himself in a way quite other than that which corresponds and belongs to His form as God, His being equal with God.”<sup>75</sup> Barth’s understanding of kenosis involves a ‘taking it upon’ or an addition to God rather than an emptying.<sup>76</sup> Barth maintains that God is still God,

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<sup>72</sup> Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 88.

<sup>73</sup> IV/1, 180.

<sup>74</sup> IV/1, 180.

<sup>75</sup> IV/1, 180.

<sup>76</sup> Barth wrote about this same passage earlier in his career in his commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians in 1927. A few things are notable about this earlier writing. First, Barth begins his exposition about kenosis by emphasizing Christ’s equality with God. Barth states that because Christ is sure of his being equal to God he doesn’t, therefore, have to cling to the form of God or be bound to it. Barth writes, “[T]he Son of God certainly does not give away his equality with God, does not give it up, but he does *let go* of it. From now on he is equal with God in the obscurity of the form of a servant. He is *in humility* the highest,” *The Epistle to the Philippians*, tr. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1962), 62. Second, Barth uses the traditional term of “emptying” to describe the kenosis here, which he later rejects in favour of defining kenosis as an addition. Barth writes, “He emptied himself of the form of God in taking on our form. It is God’s Equal himself, in all his freedom and his entirely royal sovereignty, who is the ground of this *incognito*,” 64. Third, Barth emphasizes what was accomplished through the act of humbling and obedience to death on the cross by arguing against Schleiermacher’s emphasis on the unity of God and Christ. He states, “It [the humbling and obedience of Jesus Christ] denotes in the most

not less than God (no de-divinisation occurred) in the incarnation precisely because Jesus Christ is the Self-expression of God.

In Him there is no paradox, no antinomy, no division, no inconsistency, not even the possibility of it ... It is in full unity with Himself that He is also – and especially and above all – in Christ, that He becomes a creature, man, flesh, that He enters into our being in contradiction, that He takes upon Himself its consequences.<sup>77</sup>

Through the incarnation, God wills to dwell with humanity and reconcile humanity. Humanity encounters the living and eternal God in the humble obedience of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ's obedience consists in the fact that He willed to be and was only this one thing with all its consequences, God in flesh, the divine bearer of the burden which man as a sinner must bear. According to Philippians 2:8 this was found in His human form: 'He humbled himself, by becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'.<sup>78</sup>

It is essential to comprehend what this means for Barth. Through *perichoresis* and *kenosis* the human experience of abandonment and death is taken up into the very life of God and, in that way, is overcome. Jesus Christ's obedient life and death reconciles God and humanity and reveals to humanity the eternal love of God. Barth posits, "In the condescension in which He gives Himself to us in Jesus Christ He exists and speaks and acts as the One He was from all eternity and will be to all eternity."<sup>79</sup>

Barth emphasizes that God is still God, even when (and we may even say especially when) God wills to be "God with us" through the incarnation, which includes the humble and obedient life and death Jesus Christ. Barth explains the importance of this:

There are many things we can try to say in understanding the christological mystery. But we cannot possibly understand or estimate it if we try to explain it by a self-limitation or de-divinisation of God in the uniting of the Son of God with the man Jesus. If in Christ – even in the humiliated Christ born in a manger at Bethlehem and crucified on the cross of Golgotha – God is not unchanged and wholly God, then

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thoroughgoing way the direct opposite of all Kyrios-glory – hence all things not, as Schleiermacher in almost all his Good Friday sermons used to explain it, the consummate union of Christ with the Father, but precisely the consummation of *that* aspect of God's Equal which puts his equality with God and his unity with the Father wholly in doubt," 65. Barth argues that it is the humiliation and obedience of Jesus Christ that "was recognized and confirmed by God" and not "the moral achievement of this Man," 65. Barth explains that, "What happens to the Man Jesus in his humiliation is only the reflection of what happens to God's Equal in his self-emptying. The death on the cross is indeed only the unfolding of the incarnation. There, on Golgotha, the meaning of the incarnation, the meaning of Bethlehem, breaks through and comes to view. And this – he who humbles himself even to death on the cross, he who doubly (i.e. also in his humanity) obscures himself – this is the Heavenly Head of his Church!" 65. Barth develops the idea of *kenosis* from describing *kenosis* as a giving up or emptying (in the writings on Philippians) to defining it as the taking upon or an addition in the *Church Dogmatics*.

<sup>77</sup> IV/1, 186.

<sup>78</sup> I/2, 156.

<sup>79</sup> IV/1, 193.

everything that we may say about the reconciliation of the world made by God in this humiliated One is left hanging in the air.<sup>80</sup>

According to Barth, if God changed because of the incarnation then reconciliation through the life and death of Jesus Christ would be compromised. Berkouwer correctly explains Barth's development of kenosis:

Against this threatening danger (of God against God) it must be maintained that when God surrenders Himself to curse and judgement He *in no sense enters into contradiction with Himself*. His self-surrender does not mean that He, as it were, gives Himself up and loses Himself.<sup>81</sup>

Accordingly Berkouwer notes:

His self-abasement is not limited to his *human* nature. His deity reveals and maintains itself *exactly in* His humiliation. Through it Christ shows what He can do, and through this deed of God's love in Christ we see the very thing which coincides in the most absolute way with His divine nature ... The self-abasement of Jesus has its deep ground in the divine nature of Jesus Christ and therefore *in God Himself*.<sup>82</sup>

It is this idea of humiliation and obedience that Berkouwer argues illustrates that Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is a theology of grace.

The idea of the obedience of *God* affirms anew that the central thrust of Barth's theology is the triumph of *grace*. It is in this self-humiliation of God-Himself in Christ that the triumph is revealed ... He triumphs not by the majestic, irresistible beating down of all that opposes itself against Him, but by the majestic, irresistible power of His *love and grace*.<sup>83</sup>

This emphasis on God's humble obedience as a triumph of grace is connected to the event of the cross by Berkouwer in the same paragraph:

We might say that the sharp accentuation of the 'God-Himself' as the true subject of reconciliation makes it possible to speak of a new form of a 'theologia crucis,' a theology of the cross. The power of God, the *omnipotence* of God, is revealed in the cross. Here God becomes known *in* His deity, in His self-abasement and obedience. Hereby the deepest foundation is laid for an *ethics* of the cross.<sup>84</sup>

Although Berkouwer correctly notes Barth's understanding that the revelation of God is actualised in the event of the cross, he continues to stress the motif of triumph which tends to overshadow the seriousness of sin and the drastic measures God took to overcome sin through Jesus Christ's obedient death upon the cross.

Barth's understanding of kenosis throughout the *Church Dogmatics* centres primarily upon the life and work of Jesus Christ. Hans Urs von Balthasar makes a critical modification to this idea of kenosis with his articulation of the

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<sup>80</sup> IV/1, 183.

<sup>81</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 128.

<sup>82</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 129-130.

<sup>83</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 132.

<sup>84</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 132. Unfortunately Berkouwer fails to explain what he envisions as an "ethics of the cross" when he begins a new section after this sentence.

kenotic dimension of the all three modes of the Trinity which is lacking in Barth's theology. Von Balthasar writes:

He [God] can, so to say, let himself renounce his glory. He is so divinely free that he can bind himself to the obedience of a slave. In this reciprocal detachment of two images of God, the self-emptying Son stands opposed, for a moment, to God the Father who is still (Philippians 2) in some way depicted in the colours of the Old Testament palette. But theological reflection at once evens out this difference: it is in fact the Father himself who 'does not believe it necessary to hold on to this Son', but 'delivers him over' (John 19:11; Romans 4:25, 8:32; John 3:16; 6:32), as indeed the Spirit is continuously described as the 'Gift' of them both.<sup>85</sup>

Von Balthasar's writings on the work and person of Jesus Christ includes a definition of kenosis that explains the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, while also recognising the need to incorporate the Holy Spirit into the divine action of the reconciliation of God and humanity. According to von Balthasar, the event of the cross is effective because of the involvement in the event of all modes of being in the Trinity. He argues:

By letting go of the 'form of God' that was his (and so his divine power of self-disposal) he [Jesus Christ] willed to become the One who, in a remarkable and unique manner, is obedient to the Father – in a manner, namely, where his obedience presents the kenotic translation of the eternal love of the Son for the 'ever-greater' Father ... In the time of the Son's abasement, the Spirit (proceeding eternally from the Father and from Son) receives a primacy over the Son who obeys him (and by him obeys the Father): this constitutes the expression of the fact that all of his existence is ordered, functionally and kenotically, to the Cross.<sup>86</sup>

Although this trinitarian dimension is lacking in Barth's Christocentric understanding of kenosis, Barth does articulate the action among the three modes of being within God during the revelatory event of the incarnation to explain how reconciliation occurs. During the incarnation, God remains God, but can become human and experience life as an obedient servant because, according to Barth, within the eternal triune Godhead there is an ordering and subordination. "We have not only not to deny but actually to affirm and understand as essential to the being of God the offensive fact that there is in God Himself an above and a below,

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<sup>85</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, tr. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 28. He goes on to explain, "God is not, in the first place, 'absolute power', but 'absolute love', and his sovereignty manifests itself not in holding on to what is its own but in its abandonment – all this in such a way that this sovereignty displays itself in transcending the opposition, known to us from the world, between power and impotence. The exteriorisation of God (in the Incarnation) has its ontic condition of possibility in the eternal exteriorisation of God – that is, in his tripersonal self-gift ... This does not mean, however, that God's essence becomes itself (univocally) 'kenotic', such that a single concept could include both the divine foundation of the possibility of Kenosis, and the Kenosis itself ... What it does mean ... is that the divine 'power' is so ordered that it can make room for a possible self-exteriorisation, like that found in the Incarnation and the Cross, and can maintain this exteriorisation even unto the utmost point," 28-29.

<sup>86</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 90-91.



a *prius* and a *posterius*, a superiority and a subordination.”<sup>87</sup> Barth maintains that God freely willed in eternity to exist in this unity of superiority and subordination, and it is through the incarnation that Jesus Christ reveals Godself to humanity, and the restoration of the covenant occurs. He states:

As we look at Jesus Christ we cannot avoid the astounding conclusion of a divine obedience. Therefore we have to draw the no less astounding deduction that in equal Godhead the one God is, in fact, the One and also Another, that He is indeed a First and a Second, One who rules and commands in majesty and One who obeys in humility.<sup>88</sup>

For Barth a divine ordering was necessary for reconciliation to occur in the willing command of God the Father and obedient submission of Jesus Christ. Through the incarnation and the obedience of Jesus Christ, humanity is reconciled to God as God reveals Godself in God’s triune actions as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **C. Hegel’s influence on Barth and comparing the Trinity in the writings of Barth and Moltmann**

#### *a. The Influence of Hegel on Barth*

A thorough analysis of Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity must discuss the influence of Hegel. Samuel Powell explains that “it was Hegel who gave the impetus to Trinitarian thought and enabled its resurgence after the devastating

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<sup>87</sup> IV/1, 200-201. Later Moltmann criticizes Barth for this understanding. Citing this quote from Barth, Moltmann argues, “In God there is no one-sided relationship of superiority and subordination, command and obedience, master and servant, as Karl Barth maintained in his theological doctrine of sovereignty, making this the starting point for his account of all analogously antithetical relationships: God and the world; heaven and earth; soul and body; and, not least, man and woman too. In the triune God is the mutuality and the reciprocity of love,” *God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 16-17. Moltmann urges, “We should see it [Trinitarian perichoresis] as at once the most intense excitement and the absolute rest of the love which is the wellspring of everything that lives, the keynote of all resonances, and the source of the rhythmically dancing and vibrating worlds,” 16. Moltmann also states another criticism of Barth’s understanding of God in the event of the cross. “Remarkably, I see the critical limitation of Barth in the fact that he still thinks too *theologically*, and that his approach is not sufficiently trinitarian,” *Crucified God*, 203. Randall Otto argues that Barth warns of the misuse of the term *perichoresis* while Moltmann “stands as the vanguard of theologians who have engaged in such misuse, invoking perichoresis while denying its basis in the one divine nature” by defining the unity of the persons of the Trinity in terms of the unity of love, “The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology,” in *SJT*, 54:3 (2001), 372. Compared to Barth’s description of perichoresis in the interpenetration of the diving modes of being, according to Otto, Moltmann’s perichoretic Trinity “fails to have its basis in that necessary hypostatic union” and instead Moltmann “envision[s] an eschatological verification of the ‘coming’ but ‘still absent’ and only ‘possible God’ through the transformation of the world on the basis of the idea of hope and promise,” in “The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis,” 380.

<sup>88</sup> IV/1, 202.



criticisms it received in the period of the Enlightenment and liberal theology.”<sup>89</sup> Powell carefully describes Hegel’s development and contribution while illustrating his influence upon both Barth and Moltmann, among others. First, according to Powell, “It is clear that, in Hegel’s system, God is not a being of a particular self-conscious personality. God is not actual apart from the world.”<sup>90</sup> It will be seen that this is far from Barth’s notion of actualism which emphasizes God’s being in act and relationship with humanity.<sup>91</sup>

Second, Hegel argues that God is knowable because, as Powell states, “God is spirit and therefore revelatory, intrinsically knowable and in fact truly known.”<sup>92</sup> However, “this does not mean that spirit reveals something; instead its mode of being is to reveal itself.”<sup>93</sup> Hegel writes, “The nature of the spirit is to manifest itself, make itself objective; this is activity and vitality, its sole action.”<sup>94</sup> According to Powell, “Both Hegel and Barth departed from the customary view that revelation provides us with information about God, to the effect that God is a

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<sup>89</sup> Samuel Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 259. Richard Roberts argues, “In crude but not inaccurate terms it may be said that Barth effectively inverts the Hegelian doctrine of the Trinity. Hegel resolves the Trinity into the historical process, God dies in Christ, history moves towards its spiritual and intellectual consummation. Barth, in positing the contingent historical order upon the basis of the putative contingency and historicity of God, attempts to recreate the natural order but by doing so effects a resolution and extinction of that order in the trinitarian abyss of the divine being. This is the primary significance of Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity which is no mere theological excursion of some originality but a structured reinterpretation of reality as a whole *within* the confines of fundamental dogma,” *A Theology on its Way?* 90.

<sup>90</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 115. According to Powell, this means that “the Trinity is not to be thought of as an actual being, to say nothing of three actual divine beings,” 121. Peter Hodgson explains Hegel’s description of God, “In the first moment God subsists in abstract universality; then the universal ‘sets itself forth’ or appears as finite, particular, differentiated, separated; finally the now-concretized universal returns to itself as absolute subjectivity, absolute presence-to-self, or absolute spirit. ‘It is in these three forms that the divine idea explicates itself. Spirit is the divine history, the process of self-differentiation, of diremption and return to self (3:186-7).’ By this trinitarian self-mediation, God goes from being absolute substance to absolute subject. Subjectivity is ‘the infinite elasticity of substance that enables it to dirempt itself inwardly and make itself its own object’, (3:169),” *Hegel and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127, quoting Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Deland Anderson argues that throughout Hegel’s career the theme of the death of God in Hegel can provide a framework for understanding Hegel’s philosophical “system” of speculative discourse. See further Deland Anderson, *Hegel’s Speculative Good Friday* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996).

<sup>91</sup> See further George Hunsinger *How to Read Karl Barth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30-32, 107-114.

<sup>92</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 116.

<sup>93</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 116.

<sup>94</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), 3:63.

Trinity. Both insisted that revelation is possible only because God is a Trinity and that God's Trinitarian being is reflected in revelation."<sup>95</sup> McCormack explains:

Against Hegel's speculative understanding of the Trinity, Barth noted that he understood the doctrine of the Trinity as the problem of the 'unsublatable' [unaufhebbar] subjectivity of God. Unsublatable: if revelation has as its content God Himself, God alone and God in His entirety, then the event of revelation cannot entail a change in the being of God, whether by addition or diminution.<sup>96</sup>

Although Barth concurs that God is inherently self-revelatory, his emphasis on the revelation of God's lordship differs from Hegel's. Powell notes, "It is this understanding of the content of revelation that distinguished Barth's view of the Trinity from Hegel's, for lordship implies, in Barth's reckoning, God's freedom and independence, two characteristics not conspicuous in Hegel's theology."<sup>97</sup>

Third, Hegel discusses the Trinity in two ways; as the "ontological Trinity of eternity" and "the Trinity of History."<sup>98</sup> Barth also describes the Trinity with this distinction between immanent and economic definitions, however, his conclusions about God based on revelation differ significantly from Hegel's.

Finally, one must note the differences between Hegel's and Barth's definition and use of "dialectical." According to Powell, for Hegel:

Dialectical thinking is the true method because each entity, including God, is a unity of opposites and so possesses a dialectical movement. The key to grasping Hegel's view of dialectic is the notion of negation, which is not annihilation, but 'definite negation,' the negation of particular content ... The result of this negation is "a new concept, but a higher, richer concept than that which preceded," enriched by the negation...<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 184.

<sup>96</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 353. McCormack argues that God can become a Subject in time without involving change for two reasons: "First, God remains the Subject even in the earthly form of a revealed object. Where Hegel identified the divine subjectivity with the human subjectivity in and through which it unfolds, Barth maintained the dialectical opposition between them. God is Subject in the earthly form; God does not become the earthly form. But second, and more importantly, Barth held that God as a Subject in time corresponds completely to God as a Subject in eternity. In revelation, God corresponds to Himself. The immanent Trinity is thus identical in content with the economic Trinity," 354. McCormack explains, "The difference between Barth's doctrine and Hegel's should be clear. This is not an idealistic doctrine of the Trinity, for it does not understand the subjectivity of God as the ideal projection of human subjectivity. It is a critically realistic doctrine of the Trinity which begins, in a posteriori fashion, with the fact of the divine Self-revelation (and the witness to it of the primitive Church) and asks, what must be true of God if God has done this? What must God be in eternity if He can reveal Himself in time without ceasing to be God? Barth's derivation of the Trinity is thus the fruit of an analysis of a concrete act of a concretely existing Subject," 354.

<sup>97</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 192.

<sup>98</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 120-134. Hodgson remarks that "Hegel himself does not use terms 'immanent' and 'economic', and the reference to two Trinities is misleading. The economic Trinity overreaches and includes the immanent Trinity as the first of its movements," *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 130.

<sup>99</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 112.

Everything in the world is in process of synthesising positivity (thesis) and negativity (antithesis), resulting in a third (and higher) entity (synthesis). For Hegel, "Reason is therefore a relating activity whereby separate forms are transcended and related ... [and] the contradictions of forms constitute the nature of what is self-existent."<sup>100</sup> This is in contrast to Barth's understanding of dialectic. Powell explains that for Barth, dialectic:

is used precisely in the sense in which the idealists used it, namely to denote something exists in a dual form, whose other form is not only different, but in fact the opposite, and which nonetheless, in the midst of this extraordinary otherness, remains the same – the sort of being whose identity consists in (or at least, in Barth's case allows of) difference.<sup>101</sup>

McCormack notes that in the 1922 lecture 'The Word of God as the Task of Theology' Barth:

set forth for the first time (in a well-considered theoretical form at least) what came to be known as his 'dialectical method': that is, a method which calls for every theological statement to be placed over against a counter-statement, without allowing the dialectical tension between the two to be resolved in a higher synthesis.<sup>102</sup>

Keeping in mind these comments concerning Hegel's influence, we turn to compare Barth's writings on the Trinity to Moltmann's writings.

#### *b. Comparing the Trinity in the writings of Barth and Moltmann*

Moltmann explains his own understanding of the Trinity within the event of the cross:

I myself have tried to think through the theology of the cross in trinitarian terms and to understand the doctrine of the Trinity in the light of the theology of the cross. In order to grasp the death of the Son in its significance for God himself, I found myself bound to surrender the traditional distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity, according to which the cross comes to stand only in the economy of salvation, but not within the immanent Trinity.<sup>103</sup>

Moltmann disagrees with Barth's understanding of the triune God's activity and offers a correction, arguing, "In stressing constantly and rightly that '*God* was in Christ' and *God* humbled himself, *God* himself was on the cross, he [Barth] uses a

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<sup>100</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 112-113.

<sup>101</sup> Powell, *Trinity in German Thought*, 223.

<sup>102</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 11. This work analyzes the consistency of dialectical theology in Barth's theology, as McCormack argues, "Through all the phases of development after the break with Herrmannian liberalism in 1915, Karl Barth was a critically realistic dialectical theologian," 464.

<sup>103</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, tr. Margaret Kohl. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 160. Molnar fears this surrendering of the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity results in Moltmann accepting "natural theology as a necessary prolegomenon to theology" and failing to "distinguish between creatures from the Creator in any recognizable way," in "The Function of the Immanent Trinity," 383.

simple concept of God which is not sufficiently developed in a trinitarian direction.”<sup>104</sup> Moltmann asserts:

It can, however, be avoided at this point if one makes a trinitarian differentiation over the event on the cross. The Son suffers and dies on the cross. The Father suffers with him, but not in the same way. There is a trinitarian solution to the paradox that God is ‘dead’ on the cross and yet not dead, once one abandons the simple concept of God.<sup>105</sup>

There are three problems with this criticism and correction. First, Moltmann wants to make a “trinitarian differentiation” but fails to mention the Holy Spirit. His understanding of God during the event of the cross is open to the same criticism he makes of Barth concerning the lack of the Holy Spirit. Second, Moltmann fails to articulate how his writing on the cross offers a concept of God that goes beyond the “simple concept” of God that he finds in Barth’s writing on the cross. He only states, “What happens on the cross manifests the relationships of Jesus, the Son, to the Father, and vice versa. The cross and its liberating effect makes possible the movement of the Spirit from the Father to us.”<sup>106</sup> This mentioning of the Spirit fails to explain the role of the Spirit in the event of the cross and beyond, in Jesus’ life from his baptism to the resurrection. Third, Moltmann makes the crucifixion seem like an event between God and God. Barth’s articulation of election and Christology also enables the event of the cross to be a human event that is taken up and is experienced in the very life of God. Alan Lewis notes that “Moltmann rightly sees that God suffers and dies as our partner and liberator, but ignores the fact that the suffering and death from which we need to be liberated are ‘the wages of sin,’ the expression of estrangement between God and humanity.”<sup>107</sup>

Moltmann wishes to connect the cross and resurrection from an eschatological point of reference in order to provide hope for women and men currently suffering the trials of life. Jüngel, following the direction of Barth but elaborating upon it, provides a better explanation.

The relationship between God and death has ... its particular focus in the fact that death is the wages of sin. But *this ontic*, and theologically decisive, confrontation of God with the *annihilating* power of nothingness does not exclude but rather includes the fact that God’s own being is subject to nothingness in such a way that the confrontation is made possible, *without* God contradicting himself in the process. The ‘once’ and ‘once and for all’ of the christological event are to be thought as made possible in the being of God himself.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 203.

<sup>105</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 203.

<sup>106</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 206-207.

<sup>107</sup> Alan Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 85.

<sup>108</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, tr. Darrell L. Guder (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 225.

This means that the “once-and-for-all character of Christ’s death is an eschatological uniqueness both with regard to our sins and with regard to God’s being.”<sup>109</sup> Jüngel recognises the importance of understanding the event of the cross as the event in which God reconciles humanity by bearing the sins of humanity to death in Godself and guards against allowing the event to be viewed primarily as a futuristic and eschatological hope as Moltmann does. Moltmann argues his understanding of the event of the cross “overcomes the dichotomy between immanent and economic Trinity, and that between the nature of God and his inter tri-unity.”<sup>110</sup> Lewis explains that for Moltmann the death of Jesus on the cross is “not ‘the death of God,’ for that would blur the trinitarian distinctions: the Father and the Spirit do not die. But this is death *in* God, since through the cross death and its division does pierce the life and heart of the triune family.”<sup>111</sup> Although the triune God experiences death through Jesus Christ’s death on the cross, the experience of death does not end with the resurrection. According to Lewis:

Moltmann goes much further than Barth here, attributing not just passion but death to the Godhead – and the continuing experience of death at that, through the crucified Son and the Spirit of fellowship and solidarity, until the end time; for ‘all human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, is taken up into this ‘history of God’.’<sup>112</sup>

Lewis argues that where Barth looks back at the eternal primal decision of God to become humanity and reconcile the world through Jesus Christ, Moltmann looks forward to the future. Lewis states that according to Moltmann, “At the end, and only at the end, of this history of suffering and joy will God finally be all in all and fully glorified, having become what the Trinity now is still in process of becoming.”<sup>113</sup>

Jüngel offers valuable alternative for what the death of Jesus Christ on the cross means for the triune God. Following Barth, Jüngel writes that the death of Jesus “is not only the *consequence* of that godlessness [of a self-justifying

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<sup>109</sup> Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 225.

<sup>110</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 245.

<sup>111</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 225.

<sup>112</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 227, quoting Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 245.

<sup>113</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 229. Lewis argues that Moltmann’s “bold manner of relating the historical happening of suffering and death in the cross and burial of the Son, and the continuing sighings of the Spirit, to the inner being of the Trinity, removes any possibility left by Karl Barth that in divine freedom God might have acted otherwise than as actually revealed. That God is gracious, suffering love is not a *choice*, as Moltmann sees it, grounded in a putative freedom not to love; rather, it is ‘self-evident’ and ‘axiomatic,’ is simply God’s way of being God,” *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 229.



humanity] but at the same time his *bearing* of that godlessness.”<sup>114</sup> He argues, “That Jesus suffers the death which the law foresees for the godless, *because* he identified this godlessness as such, is the conflict of the law with the law which is decided in his own person. And that is what constitutes the Godforsakenness of the cross.”<sup>115</sup> Jesus Christ’s death on the cross reveals the love of God to men and women. Jüngel describes the “identification of divine life with the dead Jesus as the event of divine love” and, therefore, the death of Jesus Christ “is the turning point of the world, because God has interposed himself in the midst of fatal Godforsakenness in order to create a new relationship with God.”<sup>116</sup> According to Jüngel, this reconciliation or new relationship “does not arise out of man’s being, but rather emerges out of annihilating death out of which the world receives that future which it cannot make for itself.”<sup>117</sup> Lewis argues that according to Jüngel:

God is the one who knows how to die and knows that in accepting death there is life, and life only through accepting death. In the Father’s surrender of the Son, and the Son’s raising by the Spirit, God brings about this life-through-death, this resumption beyond rupture, in self-fulfilment and for the sake of the world.<sup>118</sup>

Jüngel’s understanding of the reconciliation of the world through the death of Jesus Christ emphasizes the completed “already” over Moltmann’s eschatological “not yet.” While Jüngel does address the future hope of the individual (which will be addressed in chapters six and seven), his priority concerns the reconciling act of God in Jesus Christ.

#### **D. The Doctrine of Election**

To understand both why and how the Judge became the judged One, we must explore Barth’s doctrine of election. Considered by many to be his most significant contribution to Christian theology, Barth’s doctrine of election as found in *Church Dogmatics* volume II is essential for understanding the meaning of the event of the cross in Barth’s theology.<sup>119</sup> Barth discusses the eternal decision of the triune God in the context of the earlier writings on revelation (in volume I) and the Trinity as part of the discussion concerning the doctrine of God

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<sup>114</sup> Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, 367.

<sup>115</sup> Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, 367.

<sup>116</sup> Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, 367.

<sup>117</sup> Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, 368.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 255.

<sup>119</sup> Webster argues, “The doctrine of election forms the centrepiece of the doctrine of God; indeed, it is one of the most crucial chapters in the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole, summing up much of what Barth has had to say so far and pointing forward to essential features of the doctrines of creation and reconciliation,” *Barth*, 88.



(in volume II). Alan Torrance states, "The entire inner coherence of Barth's theological enterprise lies in the manner in which he holds together the articulation of the given interrelatedness of God's triune Being and the triune nature of God's being in relation to us."<sup>120</sup> That God does not want to be God without humanity is witnessed in God's act of creation, and through the reconciliation that occurred in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Barth focuses on God's eternal decision to be with humanity and the reconciliation that occurred in the event of the cross as essential for understanding the doctrine of God. According to Barth, God:

wills to belong to us and He wills that we should belong to Him. He does not will to be without us, and He does not will that we should be without Him ... He wills as God to be for us and with us who are not God. Inasmuch as He is Himself and affirms Himself, in distinction and opposition to everything that He is not, He places Himself in this relation to us. He does not will to be Himself in any other way than He is in this relationship.<sup>121</sup>

Because God wills to be in relationship with humanity, the covenant which was broken by human sin needs to be restored and reconciliation has to occur to make righteous the men and women with whom God seeks to have fellowship. This reconciliation is achieved by the triune God in the obedient death of Jesus Christ on the cross where the Judge becomes the judged One. Jüngel posits that, for Barth:

The 'eternal divine predestination' consists precisely in the fact that in his self-determining God gave his own Son ... The fact that 'God has elected fellowship with man for Himself [God]' in order to elect 'fellowship with himself for man' takes place in the obedience of the Son.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, Jüngel explains:

This understanding of double predestination is the ground for the unity of Christology and soteriology, and of the doctrines of justification and sanctification in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation ... *Praedestinatio gemina* [double predestination] is *praedestinatio dialectica* [dialectical predestination]. In Jesus Christ God ordained life for man, but death for himself. The dialect, however, is not sealed up as a paradox but broken open teleologically: 'God wills to lose in order that man may gain.' Barth's doctrine of election is already drawn up with reference to the doctrine of justification.<sup>123</sup>

The significance of Barth's original development of the doctrine of election is asserted by McCormack:

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<sup>120</sup> Torrance, *The Trinity*, 85.

<sup>121</sup> II/1, 274. In contrast to Barth's doctrine of election and the divine eternal decision to become incarnate, Hegel argues that the incarnation was a necessity. Hodgson explains that, for Hegel, "For the unity of the divine and human nature to be known with certainty, it must obtain the form of 'immediate sensible intuition and external experience'; it must appear as something that has been seen and experienced in the world," *Hegel*, 160.

<sup>122</sup> Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming*, 92, quoting Barth, II/2 161-162.

<sup>123</sup> Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming*, 92-93, quoting Barth, II/2, 162.

What Barth accomplished with his doctrine of election was to establish a hermeneutical rule which would allow the church to speak authoritatively about what God was doing – and indeed, who and what God was/is – ‘before the foundation of the world’, *without engaging in speculation*.<sup>124</sup>

Barth states that the doctrine of election is “grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because He is both the electing God and elected man in One.”<sup>125</sup> Barth radically revised the classical Reformed doctrine of predestination by appealing to Athanasius for support. “He [Athanasius] saw that the election of the man Jesus and our election, with all the grace and gifts of grace which this includes, have their ‘foundation,’ as he himself says, in the eternity of the Word or Son, an eternity which differs not at all from that of the Father.”<sup>126</sup> By articulating Jesus Christ as both the eternal subject of election and the object of election, Barth modified the Christian understanding of predestination in significant ways. McCormack explains that Barth now understands that:

In Him [Christ], the full reality of the divine predestination in both of its aspects [election and rejection] is realized ... that means that Jesus Christ was elected to take our rejection upon Himself. We only rightly comprehend the divine reprobation when and where we see it realized in Him.<sup>127</sup>

McCormack argues that this means that the “goal of His rejection, is the election of the human race. Our election is a reality in Him, not just a possibility.”<sup>128</sup> The traditional Christian doctrine of predestination is significantly altered to shift the

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<sup>124</sup> McCormack, “Grace and Being,” 92.

<sup>125</sup> II/2, 3. McCormack notes that Barth’s doctrine of election as presented in *Church Dogmatics* volume II/2 was developed as early as his first commentary on the book Romans. McCormack states, “Barth’s doctrine of election in *Romans I* constituted the rejection of the thought of two fixed groups of individuals, one belonging to the ‘elect’ and the other to the ‘reprobate’,” *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 157. The core of Barth’s doctrine of election that was developed in the Göttingen Dogmatics in 1924-1925 is essentially the same as his later writings. McCormack writes, “What is missing in this account, as judged by the standards of Barth’s later, mature doctrine of election (in *Church Dogmatics* volume II/2), is any serious reflection on the fact that election is ‘in Christ,’” 373. McCormack states that it was a paper given by Pierre Maury at a conference in Geneva during June 1936 that made Barth make critical changes to his doctrine of election as it had been developed up until that time. Just months later, in lectures given in Sept. 1936, in Hungary, Barth had already incorporated his new thoughts into his doctrine of election to make it Christocentric.

<sup>126</sup> II/2, 110. After Barth discusses the views of Athanasius which describe Jesus Christ as both the elect One and the foundation of human election, Barth writes, “We can only conclude that in spite of its great richness this insight had little or no influence upon the later development of the doctrine of predestination, to which it might well have given a completely different aspect. Not only Thomas, but the Reformers too, ignored it altogether,” II/2, 110. It is important to note that although Barth significantly alters the doctrine of election, he is unfair in this assessment. Calvin also noted the role of Jesus in election and calls Jesus Christ the “Author of Election,” *Institutes*, III.xvii.7. Richard Muller notes that “the concept of ‘Jesus Christ electing and elected’ which overcomes the threat of a ‘predestinarian metaphysic’ and of a *deus nudus absconditus* appears not as a theme barely hinted at but as a fundamental interest, indeed, as a norm for early orthodoxy,” *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Durham [NC]: Labyrinth Press, 1986), 173.

<sup>127</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 458-459.

<sup>128</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 459.

focus away from whether individual women and men are predestined for election or reprobation to a Christocentric understanding of Jesus Christ as the elect One through whom the election of all humanity occurs. McCormack posits that according to Barth, the doctrine of election “is not only the first, last, and central word in the whole of the doctrine of reconciliation; it tells us ‘who and what God is in His dealings with His creation’...”<sup>129</sup> The election of men and women has been established in the election and rejection of Jesus Christ, and through the revelation-event men and women respond to their election with confession and obedience or with denial and arrogance.

Barth’s doctrine of election fundamentally impacts humanity’s understanding of the being of God. McCormack explains that “The divine election in eternity is, first and foremost, an act of Self-determination. It consists in God’s determination to be God in a particular relation to humanity and in no other way.”<sup>130</sup> For Barth, men and women see the reality of God’s eternal self-determination and election in the event of Jesus Christ’s death upon the cross. Barth writes:

God has rejected from all eternity. He has condemned and judged and put to death in time. He has put all to death in a Son who obediently willed to suffer death in the place of all ... It was for the sake of His electing that from all eternity He rejected.<sup>131</sup>

This understanding of the love of God to be with and for humanity alters the traditional Reformed doctrine of predestination that describes God as predetermining some men and women for eternal election and selecting other men and women for rejection by defining Jesus Christ as the both the elected and rejected One who suffers death on the cross. Barth states:

By suffering death – our death – for us, He did for us that which is the basis of our life from the dead. Therefore we cannot be the ones for whom He has done this without being the ones for whom He has suffered. In God’s eternal counsel the election of rejected man did not take place without the rejection of elected man: the election of Jesus Christ as our Head and Representative, and therefore our election as those who are represented by Him.<sup>132</sup>

In Jesus Christ, the elected and the rejected One, men and women are reconciled to God. In Jesus Christ men and women are both judged and receive pardon. “We are dealing with the history in which man is both rejected and elected, both under the wrath of God and accepted by Him in grace, both put to death and alive.”<sup>133</sup> The death of Jesus Christ in the event of the cross is the place where God

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<sup>129</sup> McCormack, “The Sum of the Gospel,” 492, quoting II/2, 88.

<sup>130</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 462.

<sup>131</sup> IV/1, 345.

<sup>132</sup> IV/1, 516.

<sup>133</sup> IV/1, 516.

reconciles the world to Godself as predetermined in eternity. Hans Urs von Balthasar agrees with Barth:

The Cross is the centre of the world's history, for it transcends the categories of 'elect' and 'non-elect' by reconciling all human beings in the crucified body which hangs there (Ephesians 2:14). It is the mid-point, too, of all creation and predestination, inasmuch as we were predestined, in Christ's blood, to be the children of God 'before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1:4).<sup>134</sup>

Barth's Christological grounding of election is essential for articulating the reconciliation that occurs through the decision of God. However, while grounding the doctrine "in Christ," Barth also emphasizes the eternal action of all three modes of divine being. Barth explains:

In the beginning it was the choice of the Father Himself to establish this covenant with man by giving up His Son for him, that He Himself might become man in the fulfilment of His grace. In the beginning it was the choice of the Son to be obedient to grace, and therefore to offer up Himself and to become man in order that this covenant might be made a reality. In the beginning it was the resolve of the Holy Spirit that the unity of God, of Father and Son should not be disturbed or rent by this covenant with man, but that it should be made the more glorious, the deity of God, the divinity of His love and freedom, being confirmed and demonstrated by this offering of the Father and this self-offering of the Son.<sup>135</sup>

Barth describes the triune God acting in freedom, unity, love, and obedience to accomplish the reconciliation of women and men to God: "God from all eternity ordains this obedient One in order that He might bear the suffering which the disobedient have deserved and which for the sake of God's righteousness must necessarily be borne."<sup>136</sup> The event of the cross illustrates God's eternal decision to reconcile humanity.

Barth's discussion of election in *Church Dogmatics* volume II considers the obedient person of Jesus Christ prior to the doctrine of reconciliation in volume IV.

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<sup>134</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 16.

<sup>135</sup> II/2, 101-102.

<sup>136</sup> II/2, 123. This divine decision that "eternally ordains" reconciliation has implications for understanding the relationship between God's triunity and God's Self-determination. Kevin Hector explains that according to McCormack, "God's Self-determination is logically prior to God's triunity, in the sense that God constitutes Godself triunely for the sake of being with humanity," while for Molnar "God's immanent triunity prevents such interpretations" because it is the immanent trinity "which guarantees God's freedom even in the economy of grace," in "God's Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar," in *IJST*, 7:3 (2005), 246-247. Hector correctly notes, "While Molnar is correct in positing that God is free from external compulsion, this does not entail that God cannot bind Godself to humanity in such a way that God is eternally God-with-humanity – and never God-without-humanity," in "God's Triunity and Self-Determination," 257. In the event of the cross God is Self-revealed as God acting in freedom *for* humanity. Hector argues, "If God has disclosed God's freedom as freedom-for-us, we have no theological grounds for asserting that God must have some freedom 'above' this; to do so would be to engage in the sort of anthropocentric speculation that Molnar deplors," in "God's Triunity and Self-Determination," 257.

The man Jesus is not a mere puppet moved this way and that by God ... The man Jesus prays. He speaks and acts ... He thinks of Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God ... He speaks of His suffering, not as a necessity laid upon Him from without, but as something which He Himself wills ... In His wholehearted obedience, in His electing of God alone, He is wholly free.<sup>137</sup>

Jesus Christ is free to act according to the will of God and, as witnessed in biblical proclamation, he is obedient to death on the cross. As the subject of reconciliation, Jesus Christ is part of the eternal electing Godhead. As the object of election, Jesus Christ is the elect human being through whom all men and women are reconciled to God.

Barth's definition and use of the Logos is important in understanding Jesus Christ as both the subject and object of reconciliation. According to Barth, the eternal Logos becomes the Word incarnate and assumes human flesh as recorded in the New Testament book of John.<sup>138</sup> The Logos *asarkos* (without the flesh) is the eternal Word of God, who according to the prologue of John became the Logos *ensarkos* (within the flesh). Barth broke from the traditional Reformed teaching of the distinction between the two states of the Logos when he stressed that the Logos *asarkos* and the Logos *ensarkos* are the same self-identical Subject.<sup>139</sup> McCormack explains that because Barth "wished to speak of Jesus Christ (and not an abstractly conceived *Logos asarkos*) as the *Subject* of election, he must deny to the Logos a mode or state of being above and prior to the decision to be incarnate in time."<sup>140</sup> There is no Logos prior or apart from God's eternal decision to create humanity for fellowship and reconcile humanity through the obedience of the Son. Barth's insistence on the eternal Logos as Jesus Christ

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<sup>137</sup> II/2, 178-179. McCormack notes Barth's development concerning the doctrine of election: At the time of giving the lectures which became 'Gottes Gnadenwahl' [1936] Barth could still speak of the eternal Son of God as the subject of election and the human nature as its object. In *Church Dogmatics* volume II/2, he would integrate election and Christology in such a way that Jesus Christ (the God-human in His divine-human unity) would henceforth be understood as *both* the electing God and the elect human. See McCormack, "Barth's grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?" *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie*, 18:2 (2002), 153.

<sup>138</sup> Powell argues that here it is possible to "see again the historical significance of Hegel, whose revival of the ancient Logos idea and whose exposition of the divine being as inherently self-revelatory helped to make possible the resurgence of Trinitarian thinking that Barth initiated in the twentieth century," *Trinity in German Thought*, 191. Philip Rosato is more cautious as he sees Barth as "perhaps somewhat unwillingly slipping into an exaggerated Logos theology, which pays little attention to the generating Father and mutual spiration of the Spirit by the Father and the Son. Everything circles around the all-important generation of the Logos," *The Spirit at Lord*, 138. It is true that one may characterise Barth's theology as Christocentric, but given his articulation of the Trinity and the modes of being of the Father, Son and Spirit throughout the *Church Dogmatics*, Rosato's description seems exaggerated.

<sup>139</sup> McCormack, "Grace and Being," 94. McCormack states, "For seventeenth-century theologians, the Logos appeared in the eternal plan of God as *incarnandus* [to be incarnate] only insofar as he was the *object* of election." 94.

<sup>140</sup> McCormack, "Grace and Being," 94-95.



enables him to discuss the Logos or eternal Word of God as both the subject and object of election, which marked his correction to previous Reformed teaching. McCormack argues:

For classical Reformed theology, the decree to elect some human beings and to reject others (i.e., election and reprobation) *precedes* the decree to effect election through the provision of a Mediator (viz. Jesus Christ) ... Calvin's mistake was not simply that he understood predestination to entail a pre-temporal division of the human race into two camps... the root of the difference between Calvin and Barth lies at a much deeper level – at the level of divine ontology.<sup>141</sup>

In eternity Jesus Christ, the Logos, acts as subject in electing to become incarnate.

The election of grace is the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God in His free grace determines Himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. He therefore takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences, and elects man to participation in His own glory.<sup>142</sup>

As the object of election, Jesus Christ is the elect human. McCormack explains that, "The election of Jesus, as the election of the humanity which exists in union with the Logos, is an election to a sharing in the suffering of judgement and wrath which God has eternally appointed for himself for the sake of human redemption."<sup>143</sup> As subject, God wills to elect Godself (as a divine-human object) to redeem humanity and restore the covenant broken by human sin. Barth states that "in the election of Jesus Christ which is the eternal will of God, God has ascribed to man...election, salvation and life; and to Himself He has ascribed...reprobation, perdition and death."<sup>144</sup> Because Jesus Christ is the subject *and* the object of election, God reconciles humanity by taking upon Godself the rejection that men and women deserve, and because of this reconciliation, humanity is freed to participate in the divine covenant. McCormack notes that:

The eternal act of establishing a covenant of grace with humanity (which is the content of election) is an act of self-determination by virtue of which God has elected to be God in the covenant of grace and to be God in no other way. This is not a decision for mere role play; it is a decision with ontological significance.<sup>145</sup>

Accordingly, McCormack explains the ontological significance:

To make Jesus Christ the subject of election – if carried out consistently – is to bid farewell to the distinction between the eternal Word and the incarnate Word ... What has happened is that the actualism which had always governed Barth's talk of the

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<sup>141</sup> McCormack, "Grace and Being," 97. Gorringer explains the eternal aspect of God's election activity, "God's will to become creature for the good of the creature is the original meaning of election. In the old dispute between those who maintained that the incarnation was a response to the Fall (infralapsarians) and those who believed that God's determination to become human was an eternal resolve (supralapsarians) Barth came down on the side of the latter," *Against Hegemony*, 150. See further II/2, 139-142.

<sup>142</sup> II/2, 94.

<sup>143</sup> McCormack, "Grace and Being," 105.

<sup>144</sup> II/2, 163.

<sup>145</sup> McCormack, "Barth's grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?" 154.



divine act of relating to the human had now been pressed back into the very being of God.<sup>146</sup>

This has implications for the doctrine of the Trinity, because “the event in which God constitutes Himself as triune is identical with the event in which He chooses to be God for the human race.”<sup>147</sup> Barth’s doctrine of election assists men and women in understanding the Trinity and the person and work of Jesus Christ, as it articulates God’s love and grace for humanity. Gorringer explains, “To understand election as the sum of all good news we must see that Jesus is both the beginning of all God’s ways and works, that his election is specifically to suffering in our place, and that we must see our own election in that of the man Jesus.”<sup>148</sup> Human reconciliation with God is made possible through God’s eternal decision to become incarnate, and our participation with God occurs because of the divine decision to suffer on the cross of Golgotha.

McCormack states that there are two implications for Barth’s development of the doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics* II. First, the Christocentric focus of the doctrine of election stabilised Barth’s doctrine of revelation and his dialectic of veiling and unveiling by explaining “the way of God with His people is a way whose meaning is grounded in God’s eternal will in Jesus Christ to be gracious.”<sup>149</sup> Second, besides influencing Barth’s doctrine of revelation, Barth’s modification of the doctrine of election also influenced his understanding of the doctrine of creation. McCormack writes:

if there is no other will in God than His will to be gracious, then it will also not be possible to treat the doctrine of creation independently of the doctrine of reconciliation. God’s purposes in creating and sustaining the world are His redemptive purposes. And that means too that God’s power, goodness, and wisdom in creation cannot be treated in abstraction from the mercy and righteousness of God.<sup>150</sup>

This understanding of the eternal election of God held significant influence throughout the remainder of Barth’s theological development.

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<sup>146</sup> McCormack, “Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?” 155-156.

<sup>147</sup> McCormack, “Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?” 157.

<sup>148</sup> Gorringer, *Against Hegemony*, 150.

<sup>149</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 459.

<sup>150</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 460. McCormack explains, “The stabilization of election in Jesus Christ (i.e. the affirmation that the eternal will of God in which God determines His own being has as its content Jesus Christ) had the consequence of refocusing Barth’s attention quite strictly on the act of revelation which took place ‘there and then’. And thus, the treatment of the being of God as a ‘being in act’ was carried out by means of a Christological concentration which was far more consistent in its application than anything found hitherto in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* ... The singularity of the event in which God’s being is established and determined is guaranteed by the fact that it consists in the incarnation of the Word and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” *Barth’s Critically Realist Dialectical Theology*, 461-462.

Clearly one can see that Barth's development of the doctrine of election had significant influence on other doctrines and his later theological reflections. According to McCormack, "With the material modification of his doctrine of election in 1936, Barth's theology had arrived at a new stage of consistency with itself. Henceforth, his theology would not only be Christologically grounded in theory but in practice as well."<sup>151</sup> Barth's development of the doctrine of election marks a critical point in his theological career. Barth's doctrine of election articulates God's self-determination to be in relation with men and women and describes the eternal decision of the triune God to restore the covenant of grace with humanity. Now attention will turn to analyse the identity of the person of Jesus Christ who, as the judged One, takes the place of men and women.

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<sup>151</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 462.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Identity of Jesus Christ the Judged**

The third chapter investigated how Barth articulated the first part of his fourfold description that Jesus Christ is “for us” when he takes our place as the judge through Barth’s doctrines of the Trinity and election. This chapter will analyse how Barth explains the second aspect of Jesus Christ being “for us” as Barth writes, “Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He took the place of us as sinners.”<sup>1</sup> This investigation concerning the manner in which Jesus Christ becomes the judged one will focus on Barth’s understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ primarily by looking exploring the Christology found in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV, and by analysing the development of these thoughts in light of the doctrines of the Trinity and election just discussed. This chapter will analyse the Christology of paragraph 59 with reference the Chalcedonian definition, and the concepts of the hypostatic union, the states of humiliation and exaltation, and the threefold office of Christ.

In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV Barth explains:

But the great and inconceivable thing is that He acts as Judge in our place by taking upon Himself, by accepting responsibility for that which we do ... He ‘who knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21) – who knew nothing of that illegitimate and impossible attempt and all transgression that it inevitably brought with it, nothing of our disputing and evil-doing and enmity against God – gives Himself to the fellowship of those who are guilty of all these things, and not only that, but He makes their evil case His own ... He as One can represent all and make Himself responsible for the sins of all because He is very man, in our midst, one of us, but as one of us He is also very God and therefore He exercises and reveals amongst us the almighty righteousness of God.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus Christ is “for us” when he takes the sin of humanity upon himself and bears the burden of the divine judgement. When Jesus Christ takes our sin, it ceases to be our sin. “He is the man who entered the evil way, with the result that we are forced from it; it can be ours no longer.”<sup>3</sup> Because Jesus Christ actually becomes the sin of the world the world is reconciled with God. According to Barth:

He who is in the one person the electing God and the one elect man is as the rejecting God, the God who judges sin in the flesh, in His own person the one rejected man, the Lamb which bears the sin of the world that the world should no longer have to bear it or be able to bear it, that it should be radically and totally taken away.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> IV/1, 235.

<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 236.

<sup>3</sup> IV/1, 236.

<sup>4</sup> IV/1, 237.

It is essential to point out here Barth's emphasis on the reality of Jesus Christ taking the place of men and women as the sinners of the world.

We must be careful not to describe this event, the coming of Jesus Christ in place of us sinners, this exchange between the divine and our false human position, as an exchange only in appearance, as a kind of dressing up or masquerade, in view of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. If anything is in bitter earnest it is the fact that God Himself in His eternal purity and holiness has in the sinless man Jesus Christ taken up our evil case in such a way that He willed to make it, and has in fact made it, His own. He did not, in fact, spare His only Son but delivered Him up for all (Romans 8:32). And the sinlessness, the obedience of this one man ... is that He did not refuse to be delivered up and therefore to take the place of us sinners.<sup>5</sup>

The obedience of Jesus Christ is emphasized here in Barth's writings when he explains that "the sinlessness, the obedience of this one man ... is that He did not refuse to be delivered up and therefore to take the place of us sinners."<sup>6</sup> Men and women break the covenant with God by their disobedience and sin, but God in Jesus Christ restores it. "Our sin is no longer our own. It is His sin, the sin of Jesus Christ. God – He Himself as the obedient Son of the Father – has made it His own. And in that way He has judged it and judged us as those who committed it."<sup>7</sup> Because Jesus Christ bears the sin of humanity, God's wrath and judgement falls upon him.

Before analysing Barth's understanding of the person of Christ, it is important to explore Moltmann's understanding of Jesus' death on the cross. Moltmann argues that "the early Jewish-Christian idea of the dying Christ as an expiatory offering for our sins, which has been constantly repeated throughout the tradition in varied forms, cannot display any intrinsic theological connection with the kerygma of the resurrection."<sup>8</sup> Moltmann believes that the concept of Jesus Christ bearing the sins of the world is incompatible with the resurrection. "One can hardly talk of the resurrection of expiatory offering, any more than one can talk of the resurrection of the Son of God who sacrificed himself to satisfy the injured honour of God."<sup>9</sup> Moltmann explains:

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<sup>5</sup> IV/1, 237. This is in contrast to Hegel's definition of the term reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) as a philosophically reconstructed term. Hodgson explains Hegel's view in the 1827 lectures, "Reconciliation has nothing to do with the extrinsic payment of debt or atonement for sin ... Implicitly, reconciliation is eternally accomplished and the antithesis between divinity and humanity is overcome in principle. The antithesis or anguish must be intensified to its greatest extreme in order that humans should become aware of the need for atonement (*Aussöhnung*), that is, the sublation or nullification of the antithesis. This nullification is not something that finite subjects can bring about on their own account; rather it is eternally accomplished in the divine idea," *Hegel*, 156-157.

<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 237.

<sup>7</sup> IV/1, 238.

<sup>8</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 183.

<sup>9</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 183.

The phrase 'died for our sins' means that the cause of his suffering was our sins, the purpose of his suffering is expiation for us, the ground of his suffering is the love of God for us. It is very difficult to harmonize the resurrection of Jesus with these interpretations of his death and very difficult to harmonize interpretations of his death with his resurrection from the dead.<sup>10</sup>

Instead Moltmann suggests that "if we want to understand the cross strictly as the cross of Christ, that is the risen Christ, we must go beyond the ideas of expiatory sacrifice ... [and] we must try once again to read history eschatologically with a 'reversed sense of time' and return from the future of Christ to his past."<sup>11</sup> This means that "Through his suffering and death, the Christ who was raised from the dead *before us* becomes the Christ *for us*, just as the 'God before us' becomes the 'God for us.' The anticipation of the resurrection of the dead in him gains its saving significance for us only through his offering for us on the cross."<sup>12</sup> The death of Jesus Christ on the cross for Moltmann does not restore the covenant or judge the sins of the world. Instead, "Through his death the risen Christ introduces the coming reign of God into the godless present by means of representative suffering."<sup>13</sup> This notion of salvific and representative suffering makes Moltmann's understanding of the death of Jesus Christ different to Barth's understanding of reconciliation. "Without the representative saving significance of his death on the cross, the Christ raised from the dead would be a miracle or at best a model or a forerunner of the future."<sup>14</sup> For Moltmann, because God suffered in Jesus Christ, "the glory anticipated in him" can enter the lives of men and women who face abandonment and misery.<sup>15</sup> It is important to note the difference in Barth and Moltmann in their understanding of sin and reconciliation and how Moltmann must emphasize the eschatological importance of the resurrection in order to make sense of the death of Jesus on the cross. Now Barth's articulation of the person and work of Jesus Christ will be explored in order to explain how his death on the cross restores the covenant and reconciles men and women to God.

#### **A. The Chalcedonian definition of Jesus Christ and the hypostatic union**

A careful articulation of the two natures of Jesus Christ is important to understand how the divine God becomes human and bears the sins of humanity to reconcile the world. There has been recent debate concerning Barth's Christology

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<sup>10</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 184.

<sup>11</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 184.

<sup>12</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 184.

<sup>13</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 185.

<sup>14</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 185.

<sup>15</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 186.

as to whether or not it can be classified as “Chalcedonian” that is relevant here. Hunsinger warns, “Change the definition of Christ’s person – make him less than fully God and fully human at the same time – and the saving cure Christ offers changes drastically as well.”<sup>16</sup> Some scholars argue that Barth’s mature Christology fits securely within the scope of the traditional Chalcedonian teaching. Hunsinger states, “Chalcedon proposes that when Christ’s two natures met, they did so ‘without separation or division’ and ‘without confusion or change.’ Neither his deity nor his humanity surrendered their defining characteristics, and yet they converged to form an indissoluble unity.”<sup>17</sup> Clearly, Barth understands both natures of divinity and humanity, as essential to Jesus Christ’s reconciling activity, and stresses the importance of understanding “God as God even in His humiliation” but one can question whether or not he was using the terms as they were originally defined by the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>18</sup> During the incarnation God remains God, and “does not suffer any change, any diminution, any transformation into something else, any admixture with something else, let alone any cessation.”<sup>19</sup> In his writings Barth upholds the teaching that Jesus Christ exists as one person in two natures, fully human and fully divine, existing without separation, division, confusion or change; without both natures revelation and reconciliation could not have occurred. To subtract or weaken the deity of God would threaten the entire atonement accomplished through Christ. “He humbled Himself, but He did not do it by ceasing to be who He is. He went into a strange land, but even there, and especially there, He never became a stranger to Himself.”<sup>20</sup> Hunsinger states that “Judicious readers will at least appreciate that Barth has made a fresh, thoughtful, and distinguished attempt to be Chalcedonian in Christology precisely by speaking now in an Alexandrian, and now again in an Antiochian, voice.”<sup>21</sup> Hunsinger believes that Barth “actualized the traditional concept of the incarnation” and, therefore, “The divine and human identity of Jesus Christ in its historical enactment had to be taken seriously, Barth urged, as a qualitative and indivisible whole.”<sup>22</sup> However, McCormack questions the label of “Chalcedonian” applied to Barth’s Christology. McCormack argues against this view of Hunsinger’s noting:

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<sup>16</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 133.

<sup>18</sup> IV/1, 179.

<sup>19</sup> IV/1, 179.

<sup>20</sup> IV/1, 180.

<sup>21</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 140.

<sup>22</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 140-141.



Now there is little doubt that Barth does indeed affirm a dialectical procedure in adjudicating between the Christologies of Alexandria and Antioch in *CD I/2* – though it has to be added that his procedure at this point simply reflects earlier commitments found first in the Christology of the *Göttingen Dogmatics* and may not be assumed, without further ado, to be the procedure followed in the later doctrine of reconciliation.<sup>23</sup>

McCormack qualifies Barth's Christology as "‘historicized’ Chalcedonianism", meaning that "Barth begins with the historical facticity of what God has done and then asks (in effect): How must the being of God be constituted in eternity if he can do what we have seen him do in time?"<sup>24</sup> Although there is evidence that Barth affirmed a traditional Chalcedonian understanding of Christology in the early volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*, it is important to note the development in Barth's thought.

McCormack states that, "within the bounds of *Church Dogmatics*, Barth's Christology was never more 'Chalcedonian' than it is ... in *I/2*. Barth holds to the basic formulation 'two natures in one person' and he does so without offering any serious qualification to the philosophical ideas which generated that formula in the first place."<sup>25</sup> However, early in his career Barth's theology underwent a significant development concerning the hypostatic union that heavily influenced Barth's theology for the remainder of his career. McCormack describes the development:

In May 1924 Barth made a momentous discovery. During the course of his first lectures in dogmatics, he came upon the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christological dogma of the ancient Church in a textbook of post-Reformation theology. He saw in it an understanding of the incarnate being of the Mediator which preserved that infinite qualitative distinction between God and humankind which had been at the forefront of his concerns throughout the previous phase.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> McCormack, "Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?" 161 (in footnote 55).

<sup>24</sup> Bruce McCormack, "The Ontological Presuppositions of Barth's Doctrine of the Atonement," *The Glory of the Atonement*, ed. by Charles E. Hill & Frank A. James (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 358. McCormack explains how Barth was different from other theologians in his understanding of Christology: "Rather than approaching the task of interpreting the ontological significance of the incarnation armed with a concept of the 'divine' and a concept of the 'human' whose content has been determined in advance, Barth would like to learn from the incarnation itself what it means to be God and what it means to be human," 358.

<sup>25</sup> McCormack, "Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?" 150.

<sup>26</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 327. James Torrance explains the terms *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*: "The Chalcedonian formula was further defined by the early Church in terms of the two conceptions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*. Against an undue emphasis on the humanity of Jesus the doctrine of *anhypostasia* asserted that apart from the event of the Incarnation the human nature of Christ had no independent *per se* subsistence. Apart from the hypostatic union we can think of no humanity of Jesus. On the other hand, against any attempt to think too exclusively in terms of our Lord's deity, the doctrine of *enhypostasia* asserted that, nevertheless, in the Incarnation, the humanity of Jesus was given a real concrete subsistence within the hypostatic union. The flesh is enhypostatic in the Word. *Anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* are twin conceptions that must always be held together," in "The Priesthood of Jesus," *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth*, ed. T. H. L. Parker (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 157-158.

This was a crucial development as McCormack explains:

With the adoption of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic model of Christology, Barth had accomplished two things of fundamental importance. First, the eschatological reservation which, in the phase of *Romans II*, had been safeguarded by the time-eternity dialectic, *was now built into the very structure of his Christology*. And that meant that the time-eternity dialectic could now gradually be dispensed with with no loss of the critical distance between God and humankind which the dialectic had once secured. Thus, the shift from an eschatological to a Christological grounding of theology could take place with no weakening of the eschatological reservation. Theology in the shadow of an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology was as much a *critically realistic theology* as the previous theology in the shadow of a consistent eschatology had been.<sup>27</sup>

This development for Barth had a significant influence on not only his Christology but also on his doctrine of revelation as well. According to McCormack, "The anhypostatic-enhypostatic model was well suited for clarifying what was at stake in speaking of revelation as revelation in concealment, as indirect communication. For the Subject of this revelation is the Person of the Logos who has veiled Himself in human flesh."<sup>28</sup> During his Göttingen lectures in 1925, Barth clarified and explored the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ in more detail with his students. Barth studied and critiqued the Lutheran understanding of the hypostatic union to develop his own understanding of the hypostatic union.<sup>29</sup> McCormack discusses Barth's development of the hypostatic union:

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McCormack explains this historical concept and its impact on Barth's understanding of God: "The central thrust of the ancient dogma was that the Logos (the second Person of the Holy Trinity) took to Himself human flesh (i.e. a human 'nature', complete, whole, and entire) and lived a human life in and through it. The proximity to Barth's dialectic of veiling and unveiling was obvious. In that God takes to God's Self a human nature, God veils God's Self in a creaturely medium. He enters 'the divine incognito' - a situation of unrecognizability. Outwardly (and inwardly!), He is a human being like any other. But the Subject of this human life - we may liken this to Kant's conception of an unintuitable, noumenal self - was at every point the Second Person of the Trinity; a Subject who, because of the veil of the human flesh, remains unintuitable. Because of His unintuitability, God can only be known in Jesus where He condescends to grant faith to the would-be human knower; where He unveils Himself in and through the veil of human flesh," *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 327.

<sup>27</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 327-328. He explains, "No longer did Barth need to reduce the 'site' of revelation to a single 'mathematical point' - the event of the cross. Now, the dialectic of veiling and unveiling on its objective side could comprehend the whole of the incarnate existence of the Mediator," 328.

<sup>28</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 362.

<sup>29</sup> McCormack explains the Lutheran understanding that Barth uses to develop his thoughts: "For classical Lutheranism, the hypostatic union of the Logos with a human nature entailed a communication of the attributes of the divine nature to the human nature of Christ. On this basis, it became possible to affirm that the human Jesus participated in the divine attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, etc. This was the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature: if the Logos continued to fill heaven and earth subsequent to the hypostatic union, then the human nature of Christ must also have done so, since the human nature is present wherever the divine nature is present. Thus, the Lutherans were less interested in the hypostatic union than they were in the 'communion of natures' which they saw to be the consequence of the hypostatic union. They 'wanted to *experience* immediately the divine triumph over the antithesis of God and humankind', and to this end they made the divine nature to be directly given in the

In Barth's view, this position [the Lutheran understanding] rested upon the failure to distinguish adequately between "person" and "nature". It was not the divine nature (that which is shared by all of the members of the Godhead) which was made flesh. It was the second Person of the Trinity who was made flesh ... Thus, the union of the natures is an indirect union, mediated through the Person in whom both natures are grounded.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to recognise Barth's critique of the Lutheran tradition and his articulation of the divine Logos (the second person of the Trinity) because it has two implications for Barth's Christology. McCormack argues:

First, that the hypostatic union of the Logos with the human nature was understood to be *immediate* meant that all the attributes and operations which are proper to the human nature are rightly attributed to the Logos ... The predication of human attributes and operations to the second Person of the Trinity is therefore not to be taken as merely verbal but rather as a real predication ... [and] therefore understood by Barth to be 'direct and undialectical.' But second, that the union of the natures was understood to be indirect, mediated through the Person of the union, meant that the antithesis between God and humankind is preserved – even in the union ... The hypostatic union was therefore understood by Barth not to have taken place in a single moment, in the conception perhaps, but as taking place, moment by moment, in that the Logos continuously wills to assume the human nature.<sup>31</sup>

This understanding of the hypostatic union by Barth is crucial to understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ and how reconciliation occurred in the event of the cross. McCormack explains:

Does this mean that the antithesis between God and humankind is not overcome? No; it simply means that it is not overcome *in the human nature*, as the Lutherans would have it through their interpretation of the *communio naturarum*. The antithesis is overcome in the *Person of the union*, through the real predication to Him of the sin, guilt, and punishment of humankind ... In other words, without setting aside or removing the antithesis, the Son of God takes it to Himself and in taking it to Himself without being overcome by it, He triumphs over it.<sup>32</sup>

This articulation of how the two natures are united in the person of Jesus Christ is important for understanding who the "God with us" is and how reconciliation occurred through Jesus Christ's death upon the cross when God will to experience abandonment and death through the judgement of human sin. According to McCormack, "Barth's adoption of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology

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human nature. The result was that the overcoming of the contradiction was sought in the human nature as such," 363-364, quoting Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, para 28, page 38.

<sup>30</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 364.

<sup>31</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 364-365.

<sup>32</sup> McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 365-366. Ivor Davidson explains: "For Barth, the grace of which *enhypostasis* speaks is the good news that humanity is not overwhelmed or reduced to passivity, but exalted to true freedom in correspondence to and covenant partnership with God. Far from dissolving human agency in an ocean of transcendent divine control, an enhypostatic account of humanity's existence in Christ can be a way of expressing the importance of human freedom while also saying that the right kind of human actions are only possible by virtue of divine generosity," in "Theologizing the Human Jesus: An Ancient (and Modern) Approach to Christology Reassessed," in *IJST*, 3:2 (2001), 145.

marked a watershed in his development.”<sup>33</sup> McCormack explains the four implications this development had on Barth’s theology. “Its significance for his development lay, first of all, in the fact that the dialectic of veiling and unveiling had now been localized in the incarnation as a whole, and not just in the event of the cross.”<sup>34</sup> This is seen in Barth’s description of the states of humiliation and exaltation as simultaneous movement that constitute and reveal Jesus Christ the Mediator. Second, Barth could:

now affirm the presence of the second Person of the Trinity in history, as a Subject who enters fully into the contradiction of human existence and overcomes it, without fear of historicizing revelation. The eternal Son is present in history indirectly, never becoming directly identical with the veil of human flesh in which He conceals Himself (since the divine attributes are not properly predicated to the human nature.)<sup>35</sup>

The third implication is that he “was now able to distinguish more carefully between reconciliation (as a historical event) and redemption (as an eschatological event.) Reconciliation was no longer absorbed into a future redemption which never arrives.”<sup>36</sup> Finally, according to McCormack, this means that Barth could now “appeal to the incarnation as the ground and prototype of the *analogia fidei*. The ability of God to take up a creaturely medium like human language and bear witness to Himself in and through it is demonstrated principally in the fact that He has taken up a human nature and lived a human life in and through it.”<sup>37</sup> This is evident in Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation where Barth states:

But in Jesus Christ Himself ... we have to do with the eternal basis and temporal fulfilment of the covenant and therefore with the ground and basis of all natural and historical relationships in which the covenant is reflected as the basic relationship between God and man, God and the world, and in which it has therefore its analogies.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, Barth’s development of anhypostatic-ehypostatic Christology in 1924 was a definitive development within his theological career that influenced his later writings. Barth’s understanding of how the two natures are united in Jesus Christ influences Barth’s Christology and the doctrine of reconciliation that explains how the death of Jesus Christ on the cross restores the covenant between God and humanity.

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<sup>33</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 366.

<sup>34</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 366.

<sup>35</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 366.

<sup>36</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 366-367. McCormack explains that “the Adam-Christ dialectic was no longer seen as an eternal dialectic as in *Romans II*. It is a dialectic which is rooted and grounded in history” which allows Barth to ground revelation and the event of the cross in history, 366. And so Barth can state, “The atonement is, noetically, this history about Jesus Christ, and ontically, Jesus Christ’s own history. To say atonement is to say Jesus Christ. To speak of it is to speak of His history,” IV/1,158.

<sup>37</sup> McCormack, *Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 367.

<sup>38</sup> IV/2, 58



McCormack argues that while writing the doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics* volume II/2, “Barth began to develop the outlines of a more thoroughly relational ontology which supplanted the traditional categories of ‘person’, ‘natures’, ‘Godhead’, etc.”<sup>39</sup> By replacing the language of “natures” with the concept of “history” and integrating the concept of “history” into his concept of “person” Barth made it possible to say that Jesus Christ is “truly God, truly human and ... both in a single Subject.”<sup>40</sup> McCormack argues that Barth “preserves the theological values registered in the Chalcedonian Formula but that he has done so by fundamentally altering the theological ontology in which those values find their home.”<sup>41</sup> It is essential to understand exactly how Barth articulated the union of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ in the *Church Dogmatics* as it has profound implications for Barth’s theology.

In 1955 while discussing the doctrine of reconciliation, in an excursus on *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* Barth explains the importance of these terms for human understanding of God and what the cross means for men and women:

We [see] what depends on it [*anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*]: no less than the fact that in Jesus Christ we do not have to do with a man into whom God has changed Himself, but unchanged and directly with God Himself; no less than with the unity in which as man He is the Son of God, and as the Son of God man; and finally no less than the universal relevance and significance of His existence for all other men.<sup>42</sup>

Robert Willis thus explains that “The identity of Jesus as the Son of God in human form thus indicates an ontological distinction between him and other man which persists even though the human essence assumed in the incarnation is common to all men.”<sup>43</sup> Although Jesus Christ is fully human, he is unlike every other human

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<sup>39</sup> McCormack, “Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?” 138.

<sup>40</sup> McCormack, “Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?” 168.

<sup>41</sup> McCormack, “Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?” 168. As a result of the development in his understanding of the doctrine of election McCormack debates “whether Barth’s later Christology does not so much constitute a revision of the meaning of the term employed in the formula as it does the substitution of an altogether different ontology which makes continued use of the term ‘Chalcedonian’ misleading as applied to him,” 138.

<sup>42</sup> IV/2, 49.

<sup>43</sup> Robert E. Willis, *The Ethics of Karl Barth* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 143. This contrasts radically with the incarnation as described by Hegel. Hodgson argues, “The idea of reconciliation or of divine-human unity is realized (a) in the form of *human individuality*, indeed (b) in a *single human individual* who, according to Christian faith, is (c) the *particular person* of Jesus of Nazareth,” *Hegel*, 160. Hodgson explains that, “Ontologically, the unity of divinity and humanity is already established as the condition of possibility of reconciliation: Jesus instantiates this unity but does not add to it. Reconciliation occurs in actuality when the unity *appears*, is recognized, and is put into practice – and this depends on the revelatory impact of Jesus’ distinctive life and death. For this reason Jesus is revelatory definitive more than he is ontologically definitive for Hegel,” 163. Hodgson explains that, according to Hegel, “Divinity and humanity fuse in the shape of a human teacher-prophet who plumbs the depths of divinity. God and humanity are connected in such a way that God works within humanity without cancelling but rather strengthening human subjectivity and personality. The awkward apparatus of orthodox



in that he is the Son of God. This understanding of Jesus Christ is essential for understanding how reconciliation occurred through the death of Jesus Christ and how men and women can participate in the salvific benefits that Christ offers to humanity.

## **B. Barth's use of the two states of humiliation and exaltation**

Besides the use of the terms *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* to articulate the person of Jesus Christ, Barth describes the "God with us" by modifying the earlier church description of the two states of humiliation and exaltation. Barth appropriates the two states in an original manner by attributing the state of humiliation to the divine nature and the state of exaltation to the human nature, while continuing to emphasize the unity of the person of Jesus Christ. Hunsinger states, "His humiliation was always the basis of his exaltation, even as his exaltation was always the goal of his humiliation, and both were supremely one in his death on our behalf."<sup>44</sup> In the beginning of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation he focuses on the state of humility and the obedience of the Son of God, as Jesus Christ journeys to the far country and experiences death upon the cross.

He is as man, as the man who is obedient in humility, Jesus of Nazareth, what He is as God (and what He can be also as man because He is it as God in this mode of divine being.) That is the true deity of Jesus Christ, obedient in humility, in its unity and equality, its *homoousia*, with the deity of the One who sent Him and to whom He is obedient.<sup>45</sup>

Jesus Christ, the humiliated and exalted Word incarnate, is the basis of Barth's Christology and doctrine of reconciliation. Barth writes:

In being gracious to man in Jesus Christ, God acknowledges man; He accepts responsibility for his being and nature. He remains Himself. He does not cease to be God ... In being gracious to man in Jesus Christ, He also goes into the far country, into the evil society of this being which is not God and against God. He does not shrink from him ... He makes his situation His own ... God is not proud. In His high majesty He is humble. It is in this high humility that He speaks and acts as the God who reconciles the world to Himself.<sup>46</sup>

In the second part of the doctrine Barth discusses the state of exaltation and the homecoming of Son of Man, the resurrected One who returns to eternal life. The place where Jesus Christ's exaltation is first manifested is not in eternal heavenly glory. John Thompson explains, "This exaltation is manifest supremely

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christologies – 'two natures', 'one person', 'hypostatic union' – is replaced by a new philosophical intuition," 168.

<sup>44</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 142.

<sup>45</sup> IV/1, 204.

<sup>46</sup> IV/1, 158-159.

on the cross. The cross is the crown, goal and completion of Christ's life and work. Jesus is thus royal man in his life, crowned as king on the cross, manifest and made known as such in the resurrection and ascension."<sup>47</sup> It is in humiliation and obedience on the cross of Golgotha where Jesus Christ's power is most clearly evident. Berkouwer agrees:

It is in this self-humiliation of God-Himself in Christ that the triumph is revealed. Here it becomes evident *how* He triumphs. He triumphs not by the majestic, irresistible beating down of all that opposes itself against Him, but by the majestic, irresistible power of His *love* and *grace* ... In abasement and obedience His power becomes manifest.<sup>48</sup>

It is important to note that Barth holds together the two states of humiliation and exaltation and refuses to separate the states into temporal phases. According to Berkouwer, "Barth's conception of Christ's humiliation and exaltation does not involve two successive 'states' of Christ but rather two *sides* or *aspects* or *forms* of what takes place in Jesus Christ in His effecting of reconciliation between God and man. Humiliation and glorification take place as the *double* activity of Christ in His *one* work."<sup>49</sup> This unity of humiliation and exaltation are essential, Berkouwer notes, because it "is evident that in this way Barth *draws the consequences of his view that the being and nature of God are revealed in the humiliation*. Because Jesus Christ is the self-humiliating God He *is* at the same time the exalted man."<sup>50</sup>

Barth's emphasis on the unity of the two states of humiliation and exaltation has a wider implication for his Christology. Berkouwer explains, "The modification effected in the doctrine of the two states of Christ has its inevitable consequences for the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. These two are inseparably related."<sup>51</sup> He argues:

In working out this relationship, Barth wishes to abide by the formulation of Chalcedon: *vere Deus, vere homo*. His concern, however, is not to understand this 'vere Deus' abstractly. In the humiliation the *real* deity is made manifest. It is not true that we can first know God's Deity (His omnipotence and majesty) and then later come to an understanding of His humiliation. On the contrary, it is exactly *here*, in His humiliation, that the *essence* of His deity appears: *vere Deus*. In this humiliation He is also the *vere homo* who is *exalted*. In this bi-unity the act of reconciliation consists: the humiliation of God and the exaltation of man.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1978), 81.

<sup>48</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 132.

<sup>49</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 133.

<sup>50</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 133.

<sup>51</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 133.

<sup>52</sup> Berkouwer, *Triumph of Grace*, 133.

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is founded upon the identity of Jesus Christ as the One in whom the unity of the two natures and the unity of the two states are both distinct yet present in his obedient life and his death upon the cross.

Three things are notable about Barth's presentation of the two states of Jesus Christ. First, Barth presents relationship between the states and the two natures of Jesus Christ in the opposite manner to traditional Christian teaching. When discussing the states of Jesus Christ, humility was traditionally attributed to Jesus' human nature while exaltation was attributed to Jesus' divine nature. Barth reverses this, and in doing so he emphasizes the fact that it is God in full majesty and glory who experiences a life of humiliation and obedience in the divine-human Jesus Christ, while the human nature is exalted in the resurrection of the same divine-human. Barth stresses that the eternal God can experience a full human life (including suffering, humiliation and pain) and in fact did so as the incarnate Jesus Christ.

Second Barth insists on keeping the two natures of Jesus Christ (the person) and the two states of Jesus Christ united. The unity of the person of Jesus Christ and the states of Jesus Christ is essential as Barth later unfolds the soteriological dimensions into this interwoven unity of the doctrine of reconciliation. For Barth, the person of Jesus Christ *is* (and accomplishes) the work of Jesus Christ.

Finally, in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, it is the cross of Golgotha that is the place and event where the two states of humiliation and exaltation are both supremely revealed in the obedience of Jesus Christ. In Barth's Christology, attention must be drawn to the event of the cross and the reconciliation that occurred there in the event of supreme obedience and suffering.

### **C. The threefold office of Jesus Christ**

As Barth continues to articulate the person and work of Jesus Christ as "God with us" in his doctrine of reconciliation, Barth draws upon (and significantly modifies) the Reformed tradition's "threefold office of Christ." The traditional understanding of the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king is used to describe in detail how God is with us and how the restoration of

the covenantal relationship between God and humanity occurs.<sup>53</sup> Colin Gunton explains:

The saving history that is Jesus Christ is spelled out in *CD IV/1-3*. According to them salvation is achieved by the self-same historical happening characterized as, respectfully, a divine act, a human act and a divine-human act. Thus does Barth weave into the doctrine of salvation the three dogmatic focuses of orthodox Christianity, the divinity, humanity and divine-humanity of Jesus. Given the fallen human situation, this threefold act takes place in face of, in overcoming and in revealing the true character of the human enmity to God that is sin in its various forms. Barth also integrates other themes treated differently in the tradition, notably ... the three offices of Christ as priest (divine), king (human), and prophet (divine-human).<sup>54</sup>

In the first part of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV Barth describes the humiliation and obedience of the Son of God as part of the priestly office. "It was for man, but it was for man in Him, the One who is another, a stranger, confronting even man with his sincere acceptance and heart's confidence, in the One to whom man can only cling as to the high-priest who officiates and speaks and acts for him, that is to say, in faith in Him."<sup>55</sup> Barth draws upon the Old Testament cultic tradition and the New Testament vocabulary of the Eucharist to describe Jesus Christ as the Priest and the Sacrifice.<sup>56</sup> Jesus Christ fulfils the title of priest when He obediently offers Himself as the one true perfect and obedient sacrifice for the sins of the

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<sup>53</sup> Otto Weber explains, "There had long been a doctrine of the two-fold office (*munus duplex*, the 'sacerdotal office' and the 'royal office'). Calvin joined to them the doctrine of the 'prophetic office,' which was not as such new. Previous to Calvin, Andreas Osiander had developed similar concepts," *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol. 2, tr. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 11. Phil Butin remarks, "The influence of the Geneva [1542] and Heidelberg [1563] Catechisms was especially important in the case of Barth's Christology. In particular, their use of the *munus triplex* ... had a profound impact on the shape of the *Church Dogmatics* volume IV," in "Two Early Reformed Catechisms, the Threefold Office, and the Shape of Karl Barth's Christology," in *SJT*, 44:2 (1991), 195. Butin points out two significant areas of development that result from Barth's use of the traditional catechisms. First, "In his discussion of the Geneva Catechism, he recommends ... the dynamic and more narrative approach to Christology used originally by Calvin," 206. Second, "Throughout *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, this classically Reformed pattern [of inter-relating the second and third articles of the Apostles Creed] takes expression above all in Barth's understanding of the Spirit as 'the subjective apprehension of the grace of Jesus Christ ascribed to us, the subjective apprehension of the reconciliation of the world with God made in Him,'" 212, quoting IV/1 147. The integration of Christology and pneumatology is found in both the content and the structure of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV.

<sup>54</sup> Colin Gunton, "Salvation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 146.

<sup>55</sup> IV/1, 97.

<sup>56</sup> René Girard notes that the death of Jesus Christ may be affirmed in a "positive, derived sense of 'sacrificial' as the willingness to give oneself to others and commit oneself to God, not for sadomasochistic purposes ... but out of love and faithfulness to the other," *The Girard Reader*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996), 70. However, he also argues that Jesus' death be understood as non-sacrificial. He states that "Certainly the Passion is presented to us in the Gospels as an act that brings salvation to humanity. But it is in no way presented as a sacrifice," 178. He argues, "To say Jesus dies, not as a sacrifice, but in order that there may be no more sacrifices, is to recognize him in the Word of God," 184. Barth's understanding of Jesus Christ as both the Priest and the Sacrifice is supported by biblical texts, but Girard refuses to describe Jesus' death as a sacrifice.

world. Jesus Christ acts as both the priest and as the sacrificial instrument of atonement. Barth writes:

He is the Priest who represented us. He represented a people oppressed by its sins, threatened because of them, and in need of propitiation, a people from which the will of Yahweh is concealed, which will not be instructed properly concerning His right and law, which cannot really sacrifice or pray for itself. The priest is the mediator and representative who by virtue of his office ... actually makes possible the access of the people to its god.<sup>57</sup>

Jesus Christ is the Priest who mediates the grace of God and provides the reconciliation that humanity was unable to provide to defeat the corruption and penalty of sin. As the Priest, Jesus Christ in his divine-human unity not only represents humanity to God, but also offers the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. According to Barth, Jesus "simply offers Himself ... It is a matter of His own blood, of the giving of His own life to death ... He Himself was offered as our Passover."<sup>58</sup> What Jesus Christ performs as Priest is effective for all. "The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the offering of which is taken out of the hands of all priests, is entirely His own affair, and it is no longer a shadow and figure, but a fulfilment of the reconciliation of man with God."<sup>59</sup> It is important to see how the priestly office of Jesus Christ is combined with the two natures of Jesus Christ. James Torrance explains:

again we must think in terms of the twin conceptions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*. The doctrine of *anhypostasia* safeguards the fact that the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Jesus are the work of God Himself. God is the Subject of the atoning sacrifice, and not man. It is God who provides the Lamb and makes propitiation for our sins in Christ and who Himself bears our sins by taking the judgement on our sins to Himself. Apart from the Incarnation and the hypostatic union, there could be no priesthood of Jesus and no atoning sacrifice of our sins.<sup>60</sup>

It is important to note that the doctrine of the two natures of Jesus Christ is woven into Barth's presentation of the threefold office of Jesus as he holds together the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

After Barth links the event of the cross and the death of Jesus Christ with the priestly office, he then presents the royal or kingly office with the post-resurrection exalted Jesus Christ in the next volume of the *Church Dogmatics*.

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<sup>57</sup> IV/1, 275.

<sup>58</sup> IV/1, 277.

<sup>59</sup> IV/1, 279.

<sup>60</sup> Torrance, "The Priesthood of Jesus," 168. He elaborates the significance of this unity of nature and states: "The doctrine of *anhypostasia* rules out any Pelagian thought of Jesus as Representative Man propitiating God from the side of man by a meritorious act of human sacrifice as well as any thought of an efficacious sacrificial mass ... On the other hand, the doctrine of *enhypostasia* safeguards the fact that in the *assumptio carnis* the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus are truly human, that within the hypostatic union the sacrifice of Christ is not only God's own act of sacrifice, but is a sacrifice offered to God on behalf of men by Jesus as man," 168.



The royal man Jesus Christ is the One “who has not only declared and inaugurated, but in His own person was and is and will be the kingdom and lordship of the God who reconciles the world with Himself.”<sup>61</sup> As the King, Jesus Christ rules the world as the exalted One. “His kingdom and lordship and dominion are concretely the kingdom and lordship and dominion of this man exalted by Him to fellowship with His being and work; of the man in whom He, God, humbling Himself in His Son, became a servant.”<sup>62</sup> It is the same Jesus Christ who goes into the far country and obediently follows the will of God to death on the cross, who provides the priestly sacrifice for the sins of humanity that is exalted and rules the world as King. In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/2 Barth cites the cry from the cross to articulate the royal office of Jesus Christ and how Jesus as the Royal Man relates to other men and women.

The royal man shares such the strange destiny which falls on God in His people and the world – to be the One who is ignored and forgotten and despised and discounted by men ... His power is present to men in the form of weakness, His glory in that of lowliness, His victory in that of defeat. The final concealment is that of His suffering and death as a condemned criminal ... In the end He was absolutely alone in the world, even to the point of asking (Mark 15:34) whether God Himself, and God especially, had not forsaken him. He could not enter more radically than He did into the isolation of God in this world.<sup>63</sup>

The two states of humiliation and exaltation find their expression in Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation with the two (but united) movements of Jesus Christ which include the way of the Son of God into the far country and the homecoming of the Son of Man.

This two-fold movement of exile and return are essential to Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation because it is through the obedient suffering and death of Jesus Christ that reconciliation occurs, but it is through the leadership and lordship of the exalted royal Son of Man that men and women come to experience new life and participate in the restored covenant. Jüngel explains that “The history of the royal man Jesus includes implicitly the history of all humanity. There is an ontological connection between the being of the human Jesus and all other human beings, because God, in Jesus, transforms history into history for all humanity.”<sup>64</sup> Jesus Christ, as the exalted Son of Man reigns and rules as King over all men and women. Barth writes, “the atonement as it took place in Jesus Christ is the one inclusive event of this going out of the Son of God and the coming in of the Son

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<sup>61</sup> IV/2, 155.

<sup>62</sup> IV/2, 155.

<sup>63</sup> IV/2, 167-168.

<sup>64</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, tr. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 133.

of Man ... It was God who went into the far country, and it is man who returns home. Both took place in the one Jesus Christ.”<sup>65</sup> As both events take place in the one person Jesus Christ, Barth stresses the unity of the two movements in the one act of reconciliation in order to prevent the abstraction of designating one as the work of the divine nature and one as the work of the human nature of Jesus Christ. According to Barth:

It is not, therefore, a matter of two different and successive actions, but of a single action in which each of the two elements is related to the other and can be known and understood only in this relationship: the going out of God only as it aims at the coming in of man; the coming in of man only as the reach and outworking of the going out of God; and the whole in its original and proper form only as the being and history of the one Jesus Christ.<sup>66</sup>

Although Barth stresses the eternal dimension of the kingly office of Jesus Christ, the it is manifest on earth before His death and resurrection. Barth explains Jesus Christ’s kingdom on earth thus: “His power is present to men in the form of weakness, His glory in that of lowliness, His victory in that of defeat ... He who alone is rich is present as the poorest of the poor.”<sup>67</sup> Nowhere is Jesus Christ’s kingship more evident than on the cross of Golgotha.

As the Gospels put it, this man was not welcomed and accepted in the world and by the world in which He appeared in this superiority and in which He was the reflection of the fatherly heart of God and the self-representation of His kingdom. On the contrary, He was rejected and destroyed ... The end of His way was that He was led away; that He Himself went away into the darkness.<sup>68</sup>

The darkness of Jesus Christ’s obedient journey into the far country culminated with His execution on the cross. The royal man’s coronation occurs during this event.

In His passion the name of the God active and revealed in Him is conclusively sanctified; His will is done on earth as it is in heaven; His kingdom comes, in a form and with a power to which as a man He can only give a terrified but determined assent. And in the passion He exists conclusively as the One He is – the Son of God who is also the Son of Man. In the deepest darkness of Golgotha He enters supremely into the glory of the unity of the Son with the Father. In that abandonment by God He is the One who is directly loved by God.<sup>69</sup>

Barth points out the authority and kingdom of Jesus Christ on the cross, but emphasizes that the royal man reigns over His kingdom not from the cross, but as the resurrected and exalted One. The history of “God with us” and the act of restoring the covenant did not end with the obedient death of the Son of God on the cross. Jesus Christ as the exalted royal man reigns over humanity as the risen

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<sup>65</sup> IV/2, 21.

<sup>66</sup> IV/2, 21.

<sup>67</sup> IV/2, 167.

<sup>68</sup> IV/2, 249.

<sup>69</sup> IV/2, 252.

One. "The fact is that in and under the No of the cross a powerful Yes is also spoken: 'Christ is risen,' and that this powerful Yes may also be received and repeated."<sup>70</sup> Jesus Christ reigns as the divine One who shares our humanity, who acts as the high priest and offers atonement for the restoration of the covenant, and who is exalted so that humanity may share both the benefits of His death and participate in His exaltation as King.

Barth continues to explore the person and work of Jesus Christ in his discussion of the prophetic office in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/3, and as with the priestly and kingly offices, he significantly expands and elaborates the traditional Reformed description of the office. John McDowell explains:

Barth ... is clear that Christ's work is not yet complete, hence IV/3's discussion of his Prophetic office. Herein Christ, as the Light of Life or atonement's truth, continues to be active in triumphantly demonstrating himself in the world's darkness and overcoming it in his resurrection power.<sup>71</sup>

Barth describes the office of Jesus Christ the prophetic Mediator as the manner by which humanity comes to know the divine act of reconciliation. Through the office of the Prophetic Mediator, the person and work of Jesus Christ is revealed to women and men. "Reconciliation is not a dark or dumb event, but perspicuous and vocal. It is not closed in upon itself, but moves out and communicates itself."<sup>72</sup> Men and women come to know how Jesus Christ obediently restores the covenant through His work as Prophet. "As the reconciliation takes place in Him, its revelation takes place through Him. It does not take place, and therefore cannot be seen or understood, apart from Him or in any way in itself."<sup>73</sup> Webster describes Jesus' prophetic office and its act of mediation as being founded upon the self-revelation of God: "as revelation, reconciliation generates both the possibility and the actuality of the knowledge of itself, prescribing the manner of its own apprehension."<sup>74</sup> According to Barth the prophetic office of Jesus Christ mediates the reconciliation to humanity because Jesus Christ is the one who reconciles *and* the one who reveals. Barth explains:

He Himself is the reconciliation of the world to God which he declares. As He declares this and therefore Himself, as in the discharge of His prophetic office He mediates and establishes knowledge of Himself, He encounters man, approaching and confronting him, setting Himself over against him as the One who is for him but is not known, regarded or valued by him, as the One whose existence is filled with a salvation which

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<sup>70</sup> IV/2, 355.

<sup>71</sup> John McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and transformations beyond tragedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 148.

<sup>72</sup> IV/3, 8.

<sup>73</sup> IV/3, 39.

<sup>74</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 133.

man has overlooked, as the One who is the true life of man as yet unknown and unrecognised by him.<sup>75</sup>

The prophetic office of Jesus Christ both reveals God to humanity and also reconciles God to humanity. John Thompson explains that according to Barth:

Jesus testifies as *prophet* to what he has done, and shines as light in the darkness of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit ... Christ is his own prophet declaring his reconciliation, showing it forth as light in the world and enabling men and women to believe by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>76</sup>

The prophetic office mediates the grace of God and reveals the reconciliation that occurred in the obedient death of Jesus Christ. Webster argues that "It is the act of his effective self-glorification in which as mediator he manifests himself as truth and light, overcoming ignorance and darkness. Jesus is, and therefore is known."<sup>77</sup> Jesus Christ is known as God reveals Godself to men and women through the Holy Spirit.

McDowell points out the importance of the trinitarian foundation of this third office of Christ as it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is revealed to humanity as the Reconciler and the Mediator. This section of the *Church Dogmatics* serves to connect the person and work of Jesus Christ with the work of the Holy Spirit. McDowell notes that "IV.3 ... functions as a link between

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<sup>75</sup> IV/3, 183.

<sup>76</sup> John Thompson, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1991), 71.

<sup>77</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 135. George Hunsinger further elaborates the threefold office of Jesus Christ and explains how the three offices are related in time and eternity. He states that, "the priestly work of Jesus Christ on the cross is accomplished by him alone; the prophetic work of the risen Christ is shared with the Christian in a fellowship of witness; and the royal work of the glorified Christ is shared with the Christian in a fellowship of eternal life. The priestly work of Christ is finished and complete in such a way that it needs acknowledgment but not repetition. The prophetic is so related to the priestly work of Christ that, in this life, the noetic necessarily takes primacy over the experiential aspect of salvation. The royal is so related to the priestly work of Christ that, in the life to come, the experiential is fully and finally realized in and with the noetic aspect of salvation. The primacy of the noetic in this life is thus related to the eschatological situation of declaration; the removal of the primacy in the life to come, to the final revelation of all things as glorified in and by Jesus Christ," *How to Read Karl Barth*, 182. Hunsinger's argument that the priestly work is Christ's alone is not supported by Barth. Barth argues that the Christian community: "participates not only in His prophetic but also in His high-priestly office and work. Again, this is not in the sense that it can continue or amplify or complete His intercession on the world's behalf, for this is unnecessary, since His work is quite complete and sufficient in itself; it is in the sense that it attests His asking even before God, that there at the heart of the cosmos it can confirm the fact that His name is already hallowed, His kingdom has already come, His will is already done on earth, and the whole cosmos is caught up in a movement whose end is the meaning of its creation and preservation and of all that occurs within it. Thus the asking community stands together with its Lord before God on behalf of all creation," III/3, 279. Again Barth explains, "by and with Christ there are Christians and there is a Christianity, and it is to these that we refer. There is a discipleship of Christ. There is a faith in Him, and through Him in God. Likewise there is an obedience to Him. Likewise there is prayer or asking together with Him, and on the basis of His asking. Likewise there is a participation of the Christian not merely in His prophetic and high-priestly but also in His kingly office," III/3, 287.

Christ's reconciliatory work in IV and his [planned] redemptive work in the Spirit in V."<sup>78</sup>

It is significant to look at the structure of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV and Barth's use of the Holy Spirit in describing the person and work of Jesus Christ in the act of reconciliation. Gunton argues, "The structure of Volume IV incorporates two sections on the Holy Spirit in each of the part-volumes, relating the salvation achieved in the threefold activity of Jesus Christ to both the Christian community and the believer. There is no doubt that Barth has a doctrine of the Spirit and is far too fine a dogmatician not to see its place."<sup>79</sup> In describing the office of Jesus Christ the Prophet, Barth places significant emphasis on the role and function of the Holy Spirit. Barth writes:

The promise of the Spirit is no more but also no less than the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ operating in the time between the times ... For the prophetic work of Jesus Christ is no mere appendage or echo of His high-priestly and kingly work. It is an integral element in the whole occurrence. Hence if the promise of the Spirit is one of the forms of the prophetic work of Jesus Christ, then quite apart from the dignity to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit on a sound doctrine of the Trinity, we cannot possibly think less of His work than we do of that of Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>80</sup>

Within Barth's doctrine of Christology and doctrine of reconciliation he emphasizes the role of the triune God and the importance of the Holy Spirit. Had Barth finished the *Church Dogmatics* and elaborated upon the role of the Holy Spirit, he probably would have satisfied those critics who argue that Barth's writings display an underdeveloped pneumatology.<sup>81</sup> John Thompson concludes that "Pneumatology is a very important aspect of theology but not the whole of it. It is integrated into and integral to the whole content of the *Church Dogmatics* but is never its primary thrust."<sup>82</sup> The triune God is certainly active and present in the

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<sup>78</sup> McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology*, 149.

<sup>79</sup> Gunton, "Salvation," 152.

<sup>80</sup> IV/3, 183.

<sup>81</sup> Gunton argues that there are flaws with Barth's treatment of the Holy Spirit in volume IV. He states that, "in dogmatics, a proper distribution of weight between the various topics is important, so that the underweighting of the place of the Spirit in relation to the humanity and ministry of Jesus in Barth's thought carries implications for pneumatology elsewhere. It simply cannot say all that a doctrine of the Spirit ought to say," in "Salvation," 152.

One questions whether this charge against Barth would stand had he completed the final volume of the *Church Dogmatics* and presented a doctrine of the Spirit that was not included within the doctrine of reconciliation but was placed within the doctrine of redemption. It is also important to note that Barth delivered a lecture in Elberfeld, Germany on 9 October 1929 titled "The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life." These published lectures provide evidence that throughout his career Barth emphasized the presence of the triune God and acknowledged each of the three modes of being in his articulation of Christian theology.

<sup>82</sup> Thompson, *The Holy Spirit*, 8.



reconciliation that occurred in the obedient life and death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Barth's use of the threefold office illustrates the dynamic action of the triune "God with us" who enters humanity, is crucified, and reigns in eternity. It is through the articulation of the person and work of Christ that Barth discusses how reconciliation was achieved through the obedience of Jesus Christ to death upon the cross. In the doctrine of reconciliation Barth articulates the actuality of Jesus Christ as a historical Being who reveals the triune God to humanity and reconciles God and humanity through his obedience to the will of God. Now attention must turn to analysing the specific death of this divine-human being to understand how the obedience of Jesus Christ to death on the cross accomplishes reconciliation.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Work of Jesus Christ the Judged**

In Karl Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, the third aspect of Jesus Christ being "for us" describes the divine judgement upon the sin of humanity that Jesus Christ obediently accepted. "Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He suffered and was crucified and died."<sup>1</sup> Although it is an act willed by the divine God, Barth states that "we are dealing with an act that took place on earth, in time and space, and which is indissolubly linked with the name of a certain man."<sup>2</sup> This act has historical significance as an act in time and space, and also has significance as an act of God. "In the place of all men He has Himself wrestled with that which separates them from Him. He has Himself borne the consequences of this separation to bear it away."<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ is "for us" because in "this divine judgement the atonement made in the passion of this One is ours."<sup>4</sup> It is the event of the cross on Good Friday that reconciles God and humanity as Jesus Christ is judged "for us" and in our place. This representation by Jesus Christ in his bearing of God's judgement for humanity shares many aspects of the substitution theory of the atonement.

That God has intervened in person is the good news of Good Friday. For in the suffering and dying of Jesus Christ He has done this in the event which He, the Judge, delivers Himself up to be judged ... In Him the covenant which God has faithfully kept and man has broken is renewed and restored. Representing all others in Himself, He is the human partner of God in this new covenant – He in the authenticity, validity and force of His suffering and dying.<sup>5</sup>

The event of the cross is God's act of grace in love and freedom for sinful men and women.

The decisive thing is not that He has suffered what we ought to have suffered so that we do not have to suffer it ... This is true, of course. But it is true only as it derives from the decisive thing that in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ it has come to pass that in His own person He has made an end of us as sinners and therefore of sin itself by going to death as the One who took our place as sinners. In His person He has delivered up us sinners and sin itself to destruction.<sup>6</sup>

In the event of the cross and the death of Jesus Christ, sin is destroyed and men and women are redeemed from death and reconciled to God.

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<sup>1</sup> IV/1, 244.

<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 245.

<sup>3</sup> IV/1, 247.

<sup>4</sup> IV/1, 251.

<sup>5</sup> IV/1, 251.

<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 253.

It is important to understand the development of Barth's understanding of the atonement throughout the *Church Dogmatics* to appreciate his mature views as found in the doctrine of reconciliation. This chapter will analyse the doctrine of reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* volume II and volume IV, and then will compare Barth and Moltmann concerning the obedience of Christ. Finally, this chapter will compare the event of the cross in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation with the biblical text.

#### **A. Reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* volume II**

The Doctrine of God in *Church Dogmatics* volume II/1 contains Barth's first lengthy discussion of the atonement. It is here in the writings about the divine perfections that he begins to formulate how reconciliation occurs through the death of Jesus Christ. Barth begins paragraph 28 stating:

God is who He is in the act of His revelation. God seeks and creates fellowship between Himself and us, and therefore He loves us. But He is this loving God without us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the freedom of the Lord, who has His life from Himself.<sup>7</sup>

God is not simply the "God who loves" but, Barth emphasizes, "the Being of God who loves in freedom."<sup>8</sup> Joseph Mangina explains why it is important to understand of both concepts of God's love and freedom.

To say that God is 'the One who loves' is to answer the question as to the 'who' of God, the question of the divine identity. To say that God is the One who loves *in freedom* is to answer the question as to the 'what' of God, the question of the divine essence or of divinity itself (*CD* II/1, 300) ... The qualification 'in freedom' means, among many other things, that God loves us in the way that God wills – for example, by executing his judgement upon us as sinners.<sup>9</sup>

It is essential to see how Barth refuses to discuss God in an abstract way. Before elaborating the perfections of God in paragraph 29 he states the key to understanding how Jesus Christ and his death on the cross provides men and women with the revelation of God as One who loves in freedom:

If we abstract the love of God and therefore the purpose of God, however circumspect we may be, we describe only a word principle. Therefore we must not think away the love or the person of God for a single moment if we wish to think rightly and truly of God's divinity. God is free. Because this is the case, we must say expressly in conclusion that the freedom of God is the freedom which consists and fulfils itself in His Son Jesus Christ. In Him God has loved Himself from all eternity. In Him He has

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<sup>7</sup> II/1, 257.

<sup>8</sup> II/1, 257. Barth later writes, "There is no love of God in itself as such, just as there is no freedom of God in itself and as such. God's being consists in His being as the One who loves in freedom," 352.

<sup>9</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 66.

loved the world. He has done so in Him, in the freedom which renders His life divine, and therefore glorious, triumphant, and strong to save.<sup>10</sup>

Barth explains that when men and women attempt to understand the love and freedom of God they must look to God as revealed in Jesus Christ:

Our own attempt and proposal rests first upon a consideration of the question by what specific determinations does the love of God – not the love according to the general conception, but the love of God in Jesus Christ, as attested in Holy Scripture – become for us an event and reality so that we may and must infer in consequence that these are determinations of the divine being ... Secondly, it rests upon a consideration of the question in what determinations does the freedom of God stand – again not a universal idea of freedom but the freedom of God in Jesus Christ as attested in Holy Scripture – when His love is actualised for us.<sup>11</sup>

When Barth describes the divine perfections he does so by linking the divine attributes together under the headings of God's love and freedom in a way that makes it impossible to separate God's grace from God's holiness, or God's mercy from God's righteousness, as all fall under the scope of God's divine loving as illustrated in God's free love for humanity in the cross of Golgotha.

First, Barth defines grace as "the distinctive mode of God's being in so far as it seeks and creates fellowship by its own free inclination and favour, unconditioned by any merit or claim in the beloved, but also unhindered by any unworthiness or opposition in the latter."<sup>12</sup> The grace of God is the unmerited turning of God in loving condescension toward sinful women and men. "With His good will He takes up our cause and responsibility for us in spite of our bad will ... As we sin against God Himself, God Himself takes action to reconcile us by being gracious to us."<sup>13</sup> Second, Barth links grace to holiness. He writes, "The common factor linking the biblical concepts of the grace and the holiness of God is seen in the fact that they both in characteristic though differing fashion point to the transcendence of God over all that is not Himself."<sup>14</sup> Where grace can be thought of as God's turning toward sinful creature who attempts to resist God's love, holiness can be thought of as God's "favourable inclination [that] overcomes and destroys this resistance."<sup>15</sup> Barth simply explains, "To say grace is to say the forgiveness of sins; to say holiness, judgement upon sins. But since both reflect the love of God, how can there be one without the other, forgiveness without judgement or judgement without forgiveness?"<sup>16</sup> For Barth, God's grace and

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<sup>10</sup> II/1, 321.

<sup>11</sup> II/1, 352.

<sup>12</sup> II/1, 353.

<sup>13</sup> II/1, 356.

<sup>14</sup> II/1, 360.

<sup>15</sup> II/1, 360.

<sup>16</sup> II/1, 360.

holiness are illustrated in the death of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ “God is present with him [sinful humanity], taking over and conducting the cause which sinful man is impotent to conduct himself.”<sup>17</sup> The grace and holiness of God are clearly witnessed in the event of the cross. According to Barth, “If God does not meet us in His jealous zeal and wrath – exactly as He meets Israel according to the witness of the Old Testament, exactly as He meets it later in the crucifixion of His Son – then He does not meet us at all, and in spite of all our asseverations about divine love, man is in actual fact left to himself.”<sup>18</sup>

Barth elaborates the perfections of mercy and righteousness in a similar manner. “The mercy of God lies in His readiness to share in sympathy the distress of another, a readiness which springs from His inmost nature and stamps all His being and doing.”<sup>19</sup> God is merciful in that God bears the divine judgement for the disobedient behaviour of sinful men and women by acting to remove the alienation by bearing it Godself. Barth explains how this affects men and women:

He [Jesus Christ] breaks down ... resistance to grace by Himself appearing as grace triumphant, as the royal removal of our sin and guilt by the action of God Himself. Because our sin and guilt are now in the heart of God, they are no longer exclusively ours. Because He bears them, the suffering and punishment for them are lifted from us, and our own suffering can be only a reminiscence of His.<sup>20</sup>

Barth continues by relating the mercy of God and the righteousness of God. God’s righteousness “is a righteousness which judges and therefore both exculpates and condemns, rewards and also punishes.”<sup>21</sup> Barth’s first discussion of the atonement in volume II/1, reflects appreciative use of Anselm’s satisfaction theory. God as a loving God is also a righteous God. According to Barth, God’s

mercy does not cease to be righteousness and His righteousness does not cease to be His holy essence and to show itself as such in conflict with human disobedience. In this clash God is and does what is worthy of Himself. This necessarily means condemnation and punishment where He finds disobedience, and pardon and reward where He finds the obedience of faith.<sup>22</sup>

Barth explicitly connects the doctrine of God and God’s perfections to the doctrine of reconciliation and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

If we truly love Him [God], we must love Him also in His anger, condemnation and punishments, or rather we must see, feel and appreciate His love to us even in His anger, condemnation and punishment. For we cannot avoid the conclusion that it is where the divine and therefore the divine grace and mercy are attested with the supreme clarity in which they are necessarily known as the meaning and intention of

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<sup>17</sup> II/1, 366.

<sup>18</sup> II/1, 366

<sup>19</sup> II/1, 369.

<sup>20</sup> II/1, 374.

<sup>21</sup> II/1, 391.

<sup>22</sup> II/1, 392.



Scripture as a whole, where that love and grace and mercy are embodied in a unique event, i.e., in Jesus Christ, that according to the unmistakable witness of the New Testament itself they encounter us as a divine act of wrath, judgement and punishment ... we must not for one moment forget the full implication of the fact that it is the crucified Jesus Christ who rises from the dead.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that for Barth, Jesus Christ's death on the cross was not an event of senseless suffering on the part of an innocent individual. Barth emphasizes:

The reason why the No spoken on Good Friday is so terrible, but why there is already concealed in it the Eastertide Yes of God's righteousness, is that He who on the cross took upon Himself and suffered the wrath of God was no other than God's own Son, and therefore the eternal God Himself in the unity with human nature which He freely accepted in His transcendent mercy.<sup>24</sup>

Only God could bear the wrath of God that humans deserved but could not bear without being destroyed. God is merciful to men and women by bearing the punishment Godself.

Barth ends this discussion of the atonement within the doctrine of God and the divine perfections in volume II/1 with a fourfold explanation of the reconciling event of the cross. First, he states, "The fact that it was God's Son, that it was God Himself, who took our place on Golgotha and thereby freed us from the divine anger and judgement, reveals first the full implication of the wrath of God, of His condemning and punishing justice."<sup>25</sup> Second, according to Barth, "Because it was the Son of God, i.e., God Himself, who took our place on Good Friday, what had necessarily to happen – because God is righteous – could happen there."<sup>26</sup> Third, "Because it was the Son of God, because it was God Himself who on Good Friday suffered for us, the destruction which took place there of the suffering and death which resulted from human disobedience to God could justly satisfy and indeed fulfil the righteousness of God."<sup>27</sup> Finally, he states, "Because it was the Son of God, i.e., God Himself who took our place on Good Friday, the substitution could be effectual and procure our reconciliation with the righteous God, and therefore the victory of God's righteousness, and therefore our own righteousness in His sight."<sup>28</sup> It is clear from these citations that Barth's emphasis is on the righteousness and wrath of God. The divine mercy and love are overshadowed by Barth's description of the atoning work of the event of the cross as directed to and primarily satisfying God's righteousness. Before discussing how Barth develops

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<sup>23</sup> II/1, 394.

<sup>24</sup> II/1, 397.

<sup>25</sup> II/1, 398.

<sup>26</sup> II/1, 399.

<sup>27</sup> II/1, 400.

<sup>28</sup> II/1, 403.

his understanding to include the love of God in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, we will briefly analyse the wrath of God in the cross.

Donald Carson offers guidance concerning how the wrath of God in the event of the cross should be understood. Carson states, "There is ample biblical reason to think that God has a rich and intense emotional life, even though, since God is incorporeal, infinite, and perfect, his emotional life must not be thought of as being exactly like ours."<sup>29</sup> God's wrath must be differentiated from our perception of human emotion. According to Carson:

God's wrath is the response (including an affective element) of his holiness to sin. It is a response to creatures external to himself, even if that response is entirely shaped by who he is in his own character. Insofar as God's wrath reflects God's holiness, it is grounded in the very Godness of God; insofar as it is impossible to think of God's wrath absent sin, it is no more ultimate than sin itself.<sup>30</sup>

Barth's understanding of the holiness of God, the wrath of God, and Jesus Christ's death as being for us and in our place are similar to what Carson states above. The words that we say about the cross must address the sin of humanity and the wrath of God. According to Carson:

If the human plight is our sin and its effects, not least the fact that we stand alienated from God and rightly under his wrath, then, granted the place of the cross in the Bible's storyline, whatever else the cross accomplishes it must reconcile us to God, it must remove the ground of our alienation, it must set aside God's wrath – or it does not meet the plight that the Scriptures themselves set forth.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, Carson explains that if one model of the atonement receives precedence over the others, there are two reasons to suggest that it must be the model of substitutionary atonement. First, only the substitutionary understanding of the atonement "adequately handles the massive biblical insistence on the righteous wrath of God, which is so much a part of the Bible's storyline."<sup>32</sup> Second, he states, "I think it can be shown that from this understanding of the cross, all the other atonement models can be derived and add their own perspective and coherence."<sup>33</sup> Bearing Barth's doctrine of reconciliation and the section "The Judge Judged in Our Place" in mind, one notices that Carson's words concerning the wrath of God reflect Barth's understanding. Barth would agree with Carson's words to the church: "When this wrath is preached *in the context of*

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<sup>29</sup> Donald A. Carson, "The Wrath of God," Paper presented at the 11th Rutherford House Dogmatics Conference, 29 August – 1 September 2005, Edinburgh, Scotland, 17. For an extended analysis of the wrath of God and Jesus Christ's death in the theology of Barth see David Lauber's thorough study *Barth on the Descent into Hell* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Carson, "The Wrath of God," 17-18.

<sup>31</sup> Carson, "The Wrath of God," 27.

<sup>32</sup> Carson, "The Wrath of God," 32.

<sup>33</sup> Carson, "The Wrath of God," 32-33. This argument is also set forth by Alan Spence in "A Unified Theory of the Atonement," in *IJST*, 6:4 (2004): 404-420.

*the gospel* ... we are rightly reminded of the central problem we face in this fallen and broken world, and simultaneously hear words of forgiveness and hope.”<sup>34</sup> For Barth, when Jesus Christ bears the wrath of God and suffers death on the cross humanity is reconciled to God, and on the basis of this event the Christian community can respond in obedience and hope.

## **B. Reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV**

Turning to *Church Dogmatics* volume IV, one notices how Barth builds upon the doctrine of God in volume II while also modifying his earlier views. Barth begins by stating, “The sin and sins of man form the disruptive factor within creation which makes necessary the atonement, the new peace with God, the restoration of the covenant with the view to the glory of God and the redemption and salvation of man as the work of God’s free mercy.”<sup>35</sup> The event of the cross overcomes the sin of humanity and reconciles God to the world. According to Barth:

The very heart of the atonement is the overcoming of sin: sin in its character as the rebellion of man against God, and in its character as the ground of man’s hopeless destiny in death. It was to fulfil this judgement on sin that the Son of God as man took our place as sinners. He fulfils it – as man in our place – by completing our work in the omnipotence of the divine Son, by treading the way of sinners to its bitter end in death, in destruction, in the limitless anguish of separation from God, by delivering up sinful man and sin in His own person to the non-being which is properly theirs, the non-being, the nothingness to which man has fallen victim as a sinner and towards which he relentlessly hastens. We can say indeed that He fulfils this judgment by suffering the punishment which we have all brought on ourselves.<sup>36</sup>

Barth writes that Jesus suffers the punishment that humans deserve, but he cautions against Anselm’s theory of atonement: “The concept of punishment has come into the answer given by Christian theology to this question from Isaiah 53. In the New Testament it does not occur in this connexion. But it cannot be completely rejected or evaded on this account.”<sup>37</sup> Barth posits:

Jesus Christ has followed our way as sinners to the end to which it leads, in outer darkness, then we can say with that passage from the Old Testament that He suffered this punishment of ours. But we must not make this a main concept as in some older presentations of the doctrine of the atonement (especially those which follow Anselm of Canterbury), either in the sense that by His suffering our punishment we are spared from suffering it ourselves, or that in so doing He ‘satisfied’ or offered satisfaction to the wrath of God. The latter thought is quiet foreign to the New Testament. And of the possible idea that we are spared punishment by what Jesus Christ has done for us we

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<sup>34</sup> Carson, “The Wrath of God,” 33.

<sup>35</sup> IV/1, 252.

<sup>36</sup> IV/1, 253.

<sup>37</sup> IV/1, 253.

have to notice that the main drift of the New Testament statements concerning the passion and death of Jesus Christ is not at all or only indirectly in this direction.<sup>38</sup>

Barth is critical of Anselm's understanding of Jesus Christ's death as satisfying only the wrath of God. However, even though he cautions against understanding the atonement as solely punishment, it is evident that the idea of penal substitution still remains in Barth's doctrine of the atonement. According to Barth:

the decisive thing is not that He has suffered what we ought to have suffered so that we do not have to suffer it ... This is true, of course. But it is true only as it derives from the decisive thing that in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ it has come to pass that in His own person He has made an end of us as sinners and therefore of sin itself by going to death as the One who took our place as sinners.<sup>39</sup>

The covenant is restored when Jesus Christ obediently accomplishes that which humanity cannot accomplish.

He [Jesus Christ] has turned over a new leaf in the history of the covenant of God with man, making atonement, giving man a new peace with God ... not by suffering our punishment as such, but in the deliverance of sinful man and sin itself to destruction, which He accomplished when He suffered our punishment, He has on the other side blocked the source of our destruction; He has seen to it that we do not have to suffer what we ought to suffer.<sup>40</sup>

The key to understanding the atonement in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV rests on comprehending how Barth integrates the love and righteousness of God. The event of the cross occurs "not out of any desire for vengeance and retribution on the part of God, but because of the radical nature of the divine love, which could 'satisfy' itself only in the outworking of its wrath against the man of sin, only by killing him, extinguishing him, removing him."<sup>41</sup> Barth continues to describe the event of the cross as the event in which Jesus Christ suffered the punishment that other men and women deserve. However, it is not the wrath of God that is

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<sup>38</sup> IV/1, 253.

<sup>39</sup> IV/1, 253. Steve Holmes argues that "to speak of God's anger is to speak of God's loving concern that a creature be all that he desires it to be; if this is the case, and if a creature cannot be that without satisfaction, then God's anger demands satisfaction," in "Can punishment bring peace? Penal substitution revisited," in *SJT*, 58:1 (2005), 119.

<sup>40</sup> IV/1, 254.

<sup>41</sup> IV/1, 254. Barth continues, "Here is the place for the doubtful concept that in the passion of Jesus Christ, in the giving up His Son to death, God has done that which is 'satisfactory' or sufficient in the victorious fighting of sin to make this victory radical and total. He has done that which is sufficient to take away sin, to restore order between Himself as the Creator and His creation, to bring in the new man reconciled and therefore at peace with Him, to redeem man from death," 254-255.

I disagree with Donald G. Bloesch's labelling of Barth's understanding of the atonement along the argument set forth in Gustaf Aulén's theory of *Christus Victor*. Bloesch writes, "There is no doubt that Barth's basic affinity is with the so-called classic or dramatic view of the atonement, in which Jesus Christ is depicted as victor over the powers of darkness," *Jesus is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 43. It seems that Bloesch mistakenly categorizes Barth's understanding of the atonement as "classical." Although Barth employs diverse terms to describe the atoning work of Jesus Christ, his doctrine of reconciliation specifically articulates the reconciliation with a satisfaction motif that satisfies the love of God.

“satisfied” but, according to Barth, it is the love of God that is “satisfied.” In volume IV/1 Barth successfully integrates the mercy and love of God with the righteousness and wrath of God, which he was unable to do in volume II/1. According to Barth, the satisfaction of the love of God is illustrated in God’s love for humanity and the sovereign eternal decision to restore the covenant in the death of Jesus Christ. Barth describes this righteous love of God by defining the objects and subject of the event of the cross.

### *The objects and subjects of the atonement*

In the section “The Judge Judged in our Place” Barth articulates both the primary and secondary objects of the atonement and defines the subject of the atonement. These are critical definitions that must be clear if we are to understand the reconciling death of Jesus Christ as an event that satisfies the love of God. This section will analyse Barth’s articulation of the objects and subjects present in the event of the cross.

First, Barth describes God as the secondary object of the atonement who wills to reconcile humanity to Godself out of God’s gracious, holy, merciful and righteous love. Barth explains, “God reveals and increases His own glory in the world in the incarnation of His Son by taking to Himself the radical neediness of the world, i.e., by undertaking to do Himself what the world cannot do, arresting and reversing its course to the abyss. He owes this neither to the world nor to Himself.”<sup>42</sup>

Second, to the question *Cur Deus homo?* Barth firmly answers “Because the salvation of the world and of men, we ourselves and our salvation, are in fact included in the self-purposiveness of this divine action.”<sup>43</sup> The death of Jesus Christ includes God’s judgement upon the sins of men and women whereby the human situation is fundamentally altered and reconciliation between God and humanity is completed. Barth states, “Because what He does for Himself takes place with the intention and is complete in the fact that in its purpose and result we will not perish but have everlasting life.”<sup>44</sup> According to Barth, men and women are the primary objects of the atoning death of Jesus Christ because the

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<sup>42</sup> IV/1, 213.

<sup>43</sup> IV/1, 214.

<sup>44</sup> IV/1, 214.



loving and gracious God wills to judge their sins by destroying sin through the death of Jesus Christ.

It is important to note Barth's view of the role of men and women in the act of reconciliation. Jesus Christ completely and thoroughly acts "for us" in our place, and therefore in the act of reconciliation men and women have no part to play. God satisfies the righteous love of God by being merciful to men and women by bearing the judgement Godself. Barth states that:

we must be careful that the strict 'for us' that we have to do with here does not become a 'with us' which unites our existence with that of Jesus Christ, in which He is simply the author and initiator of what has to be fulfilled in and through us on the same level ... as though the redemptive happening which has to be proclaimed and believed under His name were something which embraces both Him and us.<sup>45</sup>

Sinful men and women cannot restore the covenant, but Jesus Christ can. According to Barth, Jesus Christ "obviously pursues our interest in our place by 'giving Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world' (Gal. 1:4). But ... there is no suggestion of our participating in this action."<sup>46</sup> The act of reconciliation is accomplished through the obedience of Jesus Christ when the sinless Son of God bears the sins of humanity in our place. "He is made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) to free us from the curse: for us, but without us – everything depends on this – without our having any longer to bear or partially bear the curse. We are simply those who have been redeemed from the curse by Him."<sup>47</sup> For Barth, the act of reconciliation is completely and utterly an act of the triune God; other men and women do not play significant roles other than as the sinful ones who condemn Jesus Christ to death on the cross.

Once men and women are justified and reconciled to God by the obedient death of Jesus Christ *then* they can respond in faith and be covenant partners with God. Barth writes that:

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<sup>45</sup> IV/1, 229.

<sup>46</sup> IV/1, 231. Here it can be noted that Barth closely follows John Calvin on this understanding of Jesus Christ accomplishing reconciliation. Calvin states: "The sacrificial victims which were offered under the law to atone for sins were so called, not because they were capable of recovering God's favour or wiping out iniquity, but because they prefigured a true sacrifice such as was finally accomplished in reality by Christ alone; and by him alone, because no other could have done it. And it was done but once, because the effectiveness and force of that one sacrifice accomplished by Christ are eternal as he testified with his own voice when he said that it was done and fulfilled [John 19:30]; that is, whatever was necessary to recover the Father's favor, to obtain forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and salvation – all this was performed and completed by that unique sacrifice of his. And so perfect was it that no place was left afterward for any other sacrificial victim," *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, (London: SCM Press, 1961), IV.xviii.13.

<sup>47</sup> IV/1, 231.

Discipleship, the being of the Christian with Him, rests on the presupposition and can be carried through only on the presupposition that Jesus Christ is Himself 'for us' – without our being with Him, without any fulfilment of our being either with or after Him ... The event of redemption took place then and there in Him, and therefore 'for us'.<sup>48</sup>

The responsibility of reconciled men and women is clear in Barth's doctrine of sanctification where he explains the role of men and women as covenant partners with God and articulates how men and women can be "for God" based on the fact that Jesus Christ was "for us" in the act of reconciliation. This is discussed in the following two chapters, but for now it must be noted that in the doctrine of reconciliation that sinful men and women are unable to contribute to the restoration of the covenant. The act of judging the sins of humanity and restoring of the covenant is willed by God and completed by God. Barth's understanding of the atoning work of Jesus Christ is directed toward both God and humanity. Humanity receives the benefits of the death of Jesus Christ when sin is judged and destroyed. God receives the benefit of the death of Jesus Christ when God's love and righteousness is upheld and the barrier of sin between God and humanity is removed.

Third, although women and men are the primary object of the atonement it is Jesus Christ who, as the subject, bears the force of God's wrath. "He Himself is the subject who in His own freedom becomes in this event the object acting or acted upon in it."<sup>49</sup> The subject of the atonement is not sinful humanity but is God. Barth writes:

There is, in fact, a complete reversal, an exchange of role. Those who are to be judged are given space and freedom and power to judge. The Judge allows Himself to be judged. That is why He came to Jerusalem, entering it as a King. He is, in fact, judged.<sup>50</sup>

Sinful men and women judge Jesus Christ and sentence an innocent man to death. According to Barth, when men and women look at the event of the cross it is a

difficult picture: difficult because of the oppression, anguish and execution of the one man who stands silent and suffering in the midst; difficult because the accusation, condemnation and punishment to which it refers all fall on the very One on whom they ought to fall least of all, and not at all on those on whom they ought to fall.<sup>51</sup>

The fact that Barabbas, a known murderer is acquitted and released while Jesus Christ is condemned and executed illustrates the horror of the event of the cross. "And those who are – unwillingly – crucified with Him are both robbers whose fellowship with Him shows that He is not dying a hero's death, but the death of a

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<sup>48</sup> IV/1, 229.

<sup>49</sup> IV/1, 246.

<sup>50</sup> IV/1, 226.

<sup>51</sup> IV/1 226.

criminal.”<sup>52</sup> The Son of God is executed by sinful humanity as the Judge becomes the one who is judged and bears the sins of the world in order that reconciliation between God and humanity can occur.

Barth explains that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ must be understood as a historical act that took place in time and space. He writes that “we are dealing with an act which took place on earth, in time and space, and which is indissolubly linked with the name of a certain man.”<sup>53</sup> The Gospels witness to “a unique occurrence for which there is no precedent and which cannot be repeated.”<sup>54</sup> The crucifixion of Jesus Christ that takes place in a specific place and at a specific time has significance for all humanity. Barth explains the Gospels says that the death of Jesus Christ:

as an act of God which is coincident with the free action and suffering of a man, but in such a way that this human action and suffering has to be represented and understood as the action, and therefore, the passion of God Himself, which in its historical singularity not only has a general significance for the men of all times and places, but by which their situation has objectively been decisively changed, whether they are aware of it or not.<sup>55</sup>

Barth explains that although many people have suffered at the hands of sinful people, and other people have died heroic deaths, what makes the death of Jesus Christ on the cross different and significant for all is the identity of the one who suffered and died. The Christocentric focus of Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation is illustrated in that Barth maintains that the identity of Jesus Christ must hold together the person and work of Jesus Christ along with his life, death and resurrection.

The mystery of this passion, of the torture, crucifixion and death of this one Jew which took place at that place and time at the hands of the Romans, is to be found in the person and mission of the One who suffered there and was crucified and died. His person: it is the eternal God Himself who has given Himself in His Son to be man, and as man to take upon Himself this human passion. His mission: it is the Judge who in this passion takes the place of those who ought to be judged, who in this passion allows Himself to be judged in their place.<sup>56</sup>

Barth argues that the event of the cross is not a question of theodicy and we are not to wonder why God permitted this suffering and death to occur. Instead we can and must acknowledge “that in this humiliation God is supremely God, that in this death He is supremely alive, that He has maintained and revealed His deity in

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<sup>52</sup> IV/1, 226-227.

<sup>53</sup> IV/1, 245.

<sup>54</sup> IV/1, 245.

<sup>55</sup> IV/1, 245.

<sup>56</sup> IV/1, 246.

the passion of this man as His eternal Son.”<sup>57</sup> The event of the cross is significant for all because, “On that one day of suffering of that One there took place the comprehensive turning in the history of all creation – with all that this involves.”<sup>58</sup>

It is essential at this point to remember Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity and his articulation of Christology to prevent Jesus Christ’s act of substitution from being described in an inaccurate manner. If we fail to articulate carefully the Trinitarian dimensions of the event of cross, then Jesus Christ’s death on the cross and his suffering for the sins of the world may be misunderstood, and God may be seen as a God who legitimizes violence, and the criticism of “cosmic child abuse” may be levelled against the event of the cross.<sup>59</sup> Barth emphasizes that it “is important to understand this passion as ... the divine action.”<sup>60</sup> The reconciliatory benefit from Jesus Christ’s suffering and death on the cross can only be properly understood if we explain that “He [God] has done that which is sufficient to take away sin, to restore order between Himself as the Creator and His creation, to bring in the new man reconciled and therefore at peace with Him, to redeem man from death. God has done this in Jesus Christ.”<sup>61</sup> A proper understanding of both the object and the subject of the atonement provides the key for understanding how Jesus Christ can bear the sin of the world and be the substitute for humanity.

Earlier we noted that God is the secondary object of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. McCormack states that “we wrongly conceive of the outpouring of the wrath of God the Father upon the Son (as the penalty due to human sin) if we conceive of it as an action of God directed toward an innocent human being.”<sup>62</sup> Although Jesus Christ was innocent, sinless and perfect in obedience, we must remember how Barth construes Jesus Christ’s divine and human natures, and how he understands the event of atonement as a human event experienced by the Logos. McCormack writes that “it is an event between the eternal Father and the Logos *as human*.”<sup>63</sup> Because of this understanding of the Trinity, according to McCormack, “What happens in the outpouring of the wrath of God by the Father upon Jesus Christ is that the human experience of the ‘penalty of death’ that

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<sup>57</sup> IV/1, 246-247.

<sup>58</sup> IV/1, 247.

<sup>59</sup> It is essential to note that Barth does not attempt to connect the suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane to situations of suffering that men and women commonly experience. Nowhere in his analysis of the Garden of Gethsemane narrative does Barth condone unnecessary suffering or violence inflicted by one person upon another.

<sup>60</sup> IV/1, 254. This criticism will be discussed further in the conclusion.

<sup>61</sup> IV/1, 254-255.

<sup>62</sup> McCormack, “Ontological Presuppositions of Barth’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” 363.

<sup>63</sup> McCormack, “Ontological Presuppositions of Barth’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” 364.

humans have merited through their sinfulness is taken into the very life of God himself.”<sup>64</sup> Jesus Christ is the substitute for humanity and experiences the wrath of God, but that experience has been eternally elected by God. This leads to our understanding of the subject of the event of atonement.

The doctrine of the Trinity must provide the framework for understanding the event of the cross. McCormack maintains that “the trinitarian axiom *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* means that if one does it they all do it. So it is the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who gives himself over to this experience.”<sup>65</sup> Far from being an example of child abuse, the event of the cross is an event that the triune God wills and experiences. “The triune God pours his wrath out upon himself in and through the human nature that he has made his own in his second mode of being – that is the ontological significance of penal substitution.”<sup>66</sup> The articulation of reconciliation must emphasize the sovereign and loving action of the triune God. Barth explains:

He is the subject and not the object of what happens – the subject even when He is the object. He is the Lord as He fulfils the work which He has undertaken for us, the work of His own deepest humiliation. He has the omnipotence in the power of this work to bear our sins, to bear them away from us, to suffer the consequences of our sins ... It is in this omnipotence that He confronts Israel, goes to Jerusalem, enters the city of the kings as a King, shows and promises and gives His body and blood to His disciples with the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper, allows Himself to be kissed by Judas and delivers Himself up into the hands of the soldiers. This is all a sovereign action. It is completed and its meaning is revealed in the passion of Christ on the cross. Even on the cross it is a divine act.<sup>67</sup>

The event of the cross is a sovereign act of love of the triune God that reconciles the world to God through the judgement of human sin and disobedience in Jesus Christ, the One who obediently suffers the penalty that men and women deserve. Barth’s careful description of the atoning work of Jesus Christ through the eternal, gracious and loving God articulates how the terrifying death of Jesus Christ on the cross is directed toward both God and humanity. Here we must compare Moltmann and Barth in their writings concerning the event of the cross.

### **C. Barth and Moltmann on the obedience of the cross**

Where Barth discusses *both* the suffering and the obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father, Moltmann primarily emphasizes the suffering of Jesus.

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<sup>64</sup> McCormack, “Ontological Presuppositions of Barth’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” 364.

<sup>65</sup> McCormack, “Ontological Presuppositions of Barth’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” 364.

<sup>66</sup> McCormack, “Ontological Presuppositions of Barth’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” 364.

<sup>67</sup> IV/1, 235, as quoted in McCormack, “Ontological Presuppositions of Barth’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” 366.



Barth states that the incarnation of Jesus Christ includes an "obedience of suffering."<sup>68</sup> According to Barth, "His [Jesus Christ's] history must be a history of suffering."<sup>69</sup> Similarly, Moltmann insists, "Through his suffering and death the Christ who was raised from the dead *before* us becomes the Christ *for* us, just as the 'God before us' becomes the 'God for us.'"<sup>70</sup> However, Moltmann stresses that Jesus Christ's suffering and death are salvific because men and women can be united to God in their own personal suffering in hope of the future coming of God's kingdom. Moltmann states, "Through his death the risen Christ introduces the coming reign of God into the godless present by means of representative suffering. He anticipates the coming righteousness of God under the conditions of human injustice in the law of grace and in the justification of the godless by his death."<sup>71</sup>

Where Barth emphasizes that Jesus Christ acts justly in place of humanity, Moltmann stresses Jesus' unity with humanity in its suffering. Moltmann explains, "[T]he necessity of representation 'for us' becomes the freedom for thankfulness 'from us.' Christ is more than necessary; he is free and sets free. He belongs to both the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, because he is himself the transition."<sup>72</sup> He argues:

When God becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth, he not only enters into the finitude of man, but in his death on the cross also enters into the situation of man's godforsakenness. In Jesus he does not die the natural death of a finite being, but the violent death of the criminal on the cross, the death of complete abandonment by God. The suffering in the passion of Jesus is abandonment, rejection by God, his Father. God does not become a religion, so that man participates in him by corresponding religious thoughts and feelings ... He humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken, so that all the godless and the godforsaken can experience communion with him.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> IV/1, 177. Jüngel emphasizes for Barth, in the event of the cross "God reveals himself in this obedience: God is the Lord as Servant. Thus He reveals himself as a God who suffers for his creation. God suffers! And just in this way he shows that he is God," *Karl Barth*, 131. Jüngel states that there are three implications: First, this suffering is necessary. "The Son of God who goes into the far country participates in the history of the chosen people, who must suffer the wrath of God because of their debasement," *Karl Barth*, 131. Second, this suffering is real to God. Jüngel explains, "If the deity of God is revealed in the suffering of Jesus Christ, then we must base our concept of God on this suffering," *Karl Barth*, 131. Third, this suffering is possible for God. "If God does not cease to be God in the suffering of his Son, but rather manifests the greatest humility, then this great humility cannot be foreign to the essence of God," *Karl Barth*, 131.

<sup>69</sup> IV/1, 175.

<sup>70</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 184.

<sup>71</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 185.

<sup>72</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 266.

<sup>73</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 276. Hegel argues that the death of Jesus is the death of God and illustrates divine love. Hegel writes: "Death accomplishes the process whereby the divine idea has divested itself, divested itself unto the bitter anguish of death and the shame of a criminal,

Moltmann fails to describe why humanity is godforsaken. A more thorough doctrine of sin and alienation from God would explain why humanity feels abandoned and forsaken by God, but Moltmann's focus is on the suffering of Jesus and not on reconciling men and women to God through the judgement upon sin.

#### **D. The event of the cross in volume IV and the biblical text**

Before turning to look at the biblical terms Barth uses to describe the reconciling activity that takes place in the event of the cross it is important to see how the event of the cross is predicted and experienced in the Old and New Testaments. Hans Urs von Balthasar in particular has explored this subject and explains that "according to the witness of both Scripture and Tradition, the whole life of Jesus should be conceived as a going to the Cross."<sup>74</sup> The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is not a random act of violence, but can be seen as the centre of God's salvation narrative as described in the biblical witness. Von Balthasar writes that "the Passion of Christ was not only predicted in the Old Testament, but was in many ways pre-experienced,"<sup>75</sup> and he cites examples of Old Testament themes of delivering up the just man and the atoning suffering of the innocent found in the Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah. Von Balthasar also cites Leviticus 26: 14-39 and Deuteronomy 28: 15-69 as examples of the wrath of God being satisfied in the delivering up of the people of Israel to their enemies. He states, "The divine abandonment of the people is authentic and unique because Israel alone has known a true and unique presence of God in her very midst."<sup>76</sup> Examples of the abandonment of individual figures in the Old Testament include Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Job, and the theme of individual abandonment is

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and thereby human finitude is transfigured into the highest – the highest love. That is the deepest anguish, this the highest love,' *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:131. Hegel explains, "Through death God has reconciled the world and reconciles himself eternally with himself. This coming back again is his return to himself, and through it he is spirit. So this third moment is that Christ has risen. Negation is thereby overcome, and the negation is thus a moment of the divine nature," *Lectures*, 3:220. Hodgson notes that the death of Christ is "not to be interpreted in the traditional way as meaning a substitutionary atonement or a transaction involving a debt that only Christ (as God-man) can pay," *Hegel*, 172. Hodgson explains that according to Hegel, "Everyone must live, die, and assume responsibility on his or her own. Christ is not a substitute for us. To make the reconciliation that has already been accomplished our own, we must take it into our own subjectivity, conform our lives to it, knowing that the ground of our redemption is the eternal history of God ... Thus the idea of satisfaction, atonement, or reconciliation is ultimately connected with the trinitarian mediation by which God is God," *Hegel*, 172.

<sup>74</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 89.

<sup>75</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 72.

<sup>76</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 73.

also found in the Psalms of lament, and in Second Isaiah. Von Balthasar states that the images of abandonment by God in the Old Testament arise out of the understanding of a covenantal relationship with God. He explains that these images of abandonment:

make us feel the loss of covenantal grace, the sin of infidelity, the act of divine reprobation as something more vital and heavy with consequence than a mere sinking into the realm of death, and that at the end of the Old Testament period the notion arises of 'Gehenna' as a place of eternal punishment.<sup>77</sup>

Von Balthasar explores Jesus' abandonment by analysing his abandonment by the disciples who cannot stay awake at Gethsemane. Von Balthasar notes the institution of the eucharistic meal illustrates Jesus' awareness of the coming hour, and Christ's teaching concerning the giving of his body and blood is a pre-experience of his death on the cross. However, the abandonment of Jesus Christ by God on the cross is different than the other Old or New Testament pre-experiences because "the decisive breakthrough by way of the 'wrath of God' into the uttermost abyss came about only on the Cross."<sup>78</sup>

With von Balthasar's views in mind we may explore the vocabulary Barth uses to discuss Jesus Christ's death on the cross. Barth explains his choice of terms:

When we spoke of Jesus Christ as Judge and judged, and of His judgement and justice, we were adopting a definite standpoint and terminology as the framework in which to present our view of the *pro nobis*. In order to speak with dogmatic clarity and distinctness we had to decide on a framework of this kind ... But exegesis reminds us that in the New Testament there are other standpoints and terminologies which might equally be considered as guiding principles for dogmatics.<sup>79</sup>

In the New Testament there are other terms used to describe how the death of Jesus Christ provides forgiveness of sin for humanity. Barth states that "in addition to the forensic imagery which we have chosen there is also, strangely enough, a financial in which the being and activity and even the self-offering of Jesus Christ for us and in our place are described as the payment of a ransom."<sup>80</sup> Another motif found in the New Testament to describe the salvific death of Jesus Christ on the cross is a military motif. Barth recognises that this military theme is found in the New Testament, but hesitates to use it as the primary way of describing the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He explains, "The Eastern Church especially, and also Luther, loved to regard and describe this work as a

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<sup>77</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 75.

<sup>78</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 73.

<sup>79</sup> IV/1, 274.

<sup>80</sup> IV/1, 274. As examples of this financial motif Barth cites Mark 10:45 and 1 Peter 1:18-19.

victorious overcoming of the devil and death which took place on our behalf. But it may again be asked whether it is advisable to try to work out systematically our thinking in this direction.”<sup>81</sup> The final motif Barth discusses is the cultic motif that describes the event of the cross and Jesus Christ’s death with reference to priestly acts and customs. This prominent motif is found in the gospel of John, in Paul’s writings and particularly in the epistle to the Hebrews. Barth states that “What we have tried to say in another way [the Judge judged in our place], if it is said correctly, cannot be anything other than that which could and can be said in the images and categories of cultic language.”<sup>82</sup> Barth compares the cultic language of Jesus Christ’s death as found in the New Testament to the fourfold framework of the Judge judged in our place.

First, stating that Jesus Christ is the priest who represents us, is the same as saying that Jesus Christ takes our place as the Judge. Barth states, “He represented a people oppressed by its sins, threatened because of them, and in need of propitiation, a people from which the will of Yahweh is concealed, which will not be instructed properly concerning His rights and law, which cannot really sacrifice or pray for itself.”<sup>83</sup> Jesus Christ, because he is the Son of God, is the true high priest and can intercede on behalf of sinful humanity and offer the necessary sacrifice. Jesus Christ is not like other human priests who act as representative and offer only a symbolic sacrificial offering that needs repeating over time. Barth explains:

At the point to which the existence of the Old Testament priest, the human priest called by God, points and can only point, there now stands and acts Jesus Christ in a way which is different from that of every other human priest, even the priest and high priest of the Old Testament. And from this point He has now crowded out and replaced from the very outset every other human priest. He is the Mediator, the Representative of His people before God.<sup>84</sup>

As the priest who offers sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity, Jesus Christ is unlike any other human priest because he is the true mediator in his divine and human natures and leads a sinless life. Barth states that we can say the same things about Jesus Christ the Judge and Jesus Christ the Priest because “in both cases He takes the place of man, and takes from man an office which has to be filled but

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<sup>81</sup> IV/1, 274. Barth cites Col. 1: 13-14 and Eph. 6:11-12.

<sup>82</sup> IV/1, 275. Frances M. Young explains that an accurate understanding of sacrifice is important “because the misunderstanding of the idea has impoverished our use of the traditional imagery through which Christian experience has been mediated to us, and because sacrifice once expressed a range of basic human reactions which are still part of our psychological make-up, and an insight into these may help us to appreciate afresh the saving relevance of the Christian gospel,” *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ* (London: SPCK, 1975), 16.

<sup>83</sup> IV/1, 275.

<sup>84</sup> IV/1, 276.

which man himself cannot fill. And in both cases a new order comes into force to establish a new covenant, which is really the genuine fulfilment of the old.”<sup>85</sup>

Second, according to Barth, stating that Jesus Christ the Judge becomes the judged and is judged in our place, means the same thing as stating that Jesus Christ, as High priest, offers himself as the sacrifice to take away the sins of the world. “This Priest ... is not only the One who offers sacrifice but also the sacrifice which is offered; just as the He is also the Judge and the judged.”<sup>86</sup> Barth offers a definition of the term sacrifice and an explanation of its basis within the Old Testament. James Torrance explains, “In the Old Testament, God’s covenant relation to Israel and Israel’s covenant relation to God were mediated only through the priesthood. The priesthood was understood as only functioning within the covenant and God’s saving relation with His people.”<sup>87</sup> In the Old Testament sacrifices are called for to restore the broken covenant between humanity and God. Barth explains that “Offerings are a substitute for what he [sinful men and women] really ought to render to God, but never does do, and never will.”<sup>88</sup> Sacrifices are “a provisional and relative fulfilment of the will and commandment of God. They are a genuine element in the history of the covenant and the history of redemption.”<sup>89</sup> However, according to Barth, “sacrifice in the Old Testament cannot bring to an end the state of things between God and His people, replacing it with another state.”<sup>90</sup> That can only be done by the coming of Jesus Christ, which restores the covenant and reconciles God and humanity because Jesus Christ is the true high Priest. Jesus Christ’s atonement is effective because he does not offer the blood of other animals, but instead he offers his own blood and gives his own life. Barth posits that the death of Jesus Christ:

is the one true sacrifice, just as He who makes it is the one true Priest: the fulfilment of what is meant by all sacrifices, and at the same time the end of all sacrifices, just as He who makes it fulfils the concept priest and at the same time makes the existence of any further priests superfluous and impossible.<sup>91</sup>

According to James Torrance, there are “two aspects of our Lord’s High Priesthood. As Son of God, He represents God to man, and as Man, He represents man to God.”<sup>92</sup> The event of the cross is the place where Jesus Christ offers up the

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<sup>85</sup> IV/1, 277.

<sup>86</sup> IV/1, 277.

<sup>87</sup> Torrance, “The Priesthood of Jesus,” 169.

<sup>88</sup> IV/1, 278.

<sup>89</sup> IV/1, 278.

<sup>90</sup> IV/1, 278.

<sup>91</sup> IV/1, 277.

<sup>92</sup> Torrance, “The Priesthood of Jesus,” 167.



sacrifice of his own being in obedience to the will of God. Barth emphasizes that “The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the offering of which is taken out of the hands of all priests, is entirely His own affair, and it is no longer a shadow and figure, but a fulfilment of the reconciliation of man with God.”<sup>93</sup> As with the Judge judged in our place motif Barth argues that:

Our whole understanding depends upon our recognising that God’s own activity and being, His presence and activity in the One who is His own Son, very and eternal God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the truth and power of that which takes place here as a history of human sacrificing and sacrifice.<sup>94</sup>

Once again, it is not senseless violence against an innocent victim, but God intervening in the world and reconciling the world by becoming Himself the sacrifice and offering Himself in place of humanity. According to Barth:

He shows Himself to be pure and holy and sinless by not refusing to become the greatest of all sinners, achieving the penitence and conversion which is demanded of sinners, undertaking the bitter reality of being the accused and condemned and judged and executed man of sin, in order that in place of this man another man who is pleasing to God, the man of obedience, may have space and air and be able to live. He who gives Himself up to this is the same eternal God who wills and demands it ... Both the demanding and the giving are a single related decision in God Himself.<sup>95</sup>

The final point of comparison Barth makes between the Judge judged in our place and the cultic motif concerns the ability of Jesus Christ to act justly in our place and offer the perfect sacrifice that humanity cannot offer. Barth states, “He who as the perfect Priest took the place of all human priests, by offering Himself, has substituted a perfect sacrifice for all the sacrifices offered by men.”<sup>96</sup> In this gift of self-sacrifice, reconciliation occurs between God and humanity. According to Barth, “In His sacrifice God has affirmed Himself and the man Jesus as His Son. That is, therefore the true and perfect sacrifice.”<sup>97</sup>

James Torrance notes that the importance of understanding the atoning vocabulary of the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Christological framework discussed in the previous chapter. He argues:

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<sup>93</sup> IV/1, 279.

<sup>94</sup> IV/1, 280.

<sup>95</sup> IV/1, 280-281.

<sup>96</sup> IV/1, 281.

<sup>97</sup> IV/1, 282. Von Balthasar also points out the similarities between Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death and that of the paschal lamb in the Old Testament. He states that it is important to note that in the gospel of John none of Jesus’ bones were broken and a spear pierced his side. He explains, “Certainly, the primary reference is to the true paschal Lamb, whose bones were not to be broken (Exodus 12:46), and perhaps also to Psalm 34:20ff, where the Lord keeps all the bones of the just man so that ‘not one of them is broken’. According to John (19:14), Jesus was crucified at the same hour in which, in the Temple, the Passover lambs were slaughtered. For the same reason, and *a fortiori* [for a stronger reason], Jesus could not be stoned. On the contrary, the rabbinic legislation prescribes, ‘Let the heart of the slain lamb be opened, and its blood flow forth’,” *Mysterium Paschale*, 129.

The doctrine of the hypostatic union of God and man in Christ, understood in terms of our Lord's Priesthood, means that Jesus is at once the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, at once the Son of God and the Suffering Servant, at once our Faithful High Priest and the Lamb of God, at once the Judge of all the earth and the Man who was judged for us.<sup>98</sup>

According to Torrance, this means that concerning Barth's use of the priesthood of Jesus Christ:

we must think in terms of the twin conceptions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*. The doctrine of *anhypostasia* safeguards that fact that the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Jesus are the work of God Himself. God is the Subject of the atoning sacrifice, not man ... On the other hand, the doctrine of *enhypostasia* safeguards the fact that in the *assumption carnis* the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus are truly human, that within the hypostatic union the sacrifice of Christ is not only God's own act of sacrifice, but is a sacrifice offered to God on behalf of men by Jesus as man.<sup>99</sup>

Because it is God acting in Jesus Christ, this sacrifice has restored the covenant and allows men and women to live as true covenant partners with God. Barth states that:

What He has done He has done in order that being done by Him it may be done by us; not only acceptable to God, but already accepted; our work which is pleasing to Him; our own being as those who are dead to sin and can live to righteousness. He alone has done this, but because He has done it, in a decision that cannot be reversed, with a truth which is absolute, He has done it for us.<sup>100</sup>

In cultic terms, Jesus Christ is the perfect high Priest who offers himself as the sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity and to restore the covenant between God and humanity.

According to Barth, the priesthood of Jesus Christ does not end with the event of the cross. As the high priest who was resurrected from the dead, he not only atones for the sins of the world on the cross, but he continues to mediate between God and humanity. According to Barth, "He not only did but does stand before God for us – not in a different form but in exactly the same form as He stood before Him for us 'in the days of His flesh' as the Judge judged and the priest sacrificed."<sup>101</sup> Jesus Christ continues to represent humanity to God and mediate between God and men and women. He posits:

He is a 'High Priest forever' (Hebrews 5:6, 6:20, 7:17). His is an unchangeable priesthood (Hebrews 7:24) ... It is not that we had but have Him as a High Priest (Hebrews 4:14, 8:1, 10:19) ... These are just a few of the explicit statements from the New Testament about the eternal unity, or the temporal togetherness, of the humiliated and the exalted, the crucified and the risen Jesus Christ, the obedience of the Son and the grace of the Father.<sup>102</sup>

Barth explains Jesus Christ's intercession on behalf of humanity:

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<sup>98</sup> Torrance, "The Priesthood of Jesus," 167-168.

<sup>99</sup> Torrance, "The Priesthood of Jesus," 168.

<sup>100</sup> IV/1, 283.

<sup>101</sup> IV/1, 314.

<sup>102</sup> IV/1, 314.

There is no moment in which Jesus Christ is not Judge and High Priest and accomplishes these things. There is no moment in which this perfect tense is not a present ... Because as crucified and dead He is risen and lives, the fact of His death on the cross can never be past, it can never cease to be His action, the decision which God makes *hic et nunc* [here and now] to His own glory and in our favour, summoning us on our part to responsibility.<sup>103</sup>

Barth understands the event of the cross as a completed act, but also an act with continuing influence. According to Barth, Jesus Christ “not only did represent us, but does represent us. He not only did bear the sin of the world, He does bear it ... He not only went the way from Jordan to Golgotha, but He still goes it, again and again.”<sup>104</sup> Attention must be given to the obedience of Jesus Christ that effectively accomplishes reconciliation. The next chapter will explore Jesus’ atoning work for us and in our place and will analyse the relationship between the cross and resurrection according to Barth and Moltmann.

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<sup>103</sup> IV/1, 315.

<sup>104</sup> IV/1, 313. Gérard Rossé also understands Jesus Christ’s role as Mediator based on the cross. He states that “On the cross, particularly in the abandonment, Jesus is fully Mediator in act for all times. Mark had already made this clear by closely connecting the episode of the torn veil of the temple with the death: in that act on which the cry of abandonment is commentary, Jesus is the tear between heaven and earth, the place where God and man are joined,” *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1987), 119.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Efficacy of the Cross: Jesus Christ Acts Justly in our Place**

In Barth's doctrine of reconciliation the fourth aspect of Jesus Christ being "for us" is the idea that "He has done this before God and has therefore done right."<sup>1</sup> Where humanity could not act justly with righteousness, Jesus Christ was able to act justly and obediently before God and in our place to reconcile the world to God. This chapter will explore the righteousness of Jesus Christ who acted "for us" and "in our place" in his death on the cross. Barth writes:

He emptied Himself, becoming as we are – and in so doing demonstrating and confirming the true deity of God – placing Himself in the series of men who rebelled against God in their delusion that they would be as God, not in order to refuse or conceal or deny this, but in the place of all other men – who refuse to do so – to confess it, to take upon Himself this guilt of all other human beings in order in the name of all to put God in the right against Him. In so doing He acted justly in the place of all and for the sake of all.<sup>2</sup>

According to Barth, the event of the cross is the significant event where reconciliation between God and humanity occurs.

[I]n the free penitence of Jesus of Nazareth which began in Jordan when he entered on His way as Judge and was completed on the cross of Golgotha when He was judged – there took place the positive act concealed in His passion as the negative form of the divine action of reconciliation. In this penitence of His He 'fulfilled all righteousness' (Mt 3:15). It made His day – the day of divine judgement – the great day of atonement, the day of the dawn of a new heaven and a new earth, the birthday of a new man.<sup>3</sup>

Barth pays particular attention to the obedience of Jesus Christ as he describes how Jesus Christ accomplishes that which other men and women could not. First, this chapter will explore Barth's discussion concerning the wilderness and Gethsemane narratives. Then this chapter will compare Barth and Moltmann concerning the efficacy of the cross and their understanding of Christ acting "for us" and "in our place." Finally, this chapter will compare Barth and Moltmann concerning their understanding of the relationship between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

#### **A. Jesus Christ's obedience in the wilderness and Gethsemane**

As Barth articulates how Jesus Christ's death is effective for others, he analyzes Jesus Christ's action in the narratives that discuss the temptation in the

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<sup>1</sup> IV/1, 256.

<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 259.

<sup>3</sup> IV/1, 259.

wilderness and Gethsemane. Barth's interpretation of the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ's activity in the wilderness and at Gethsemane illustrate his emphasis on retaining the unity of the person and work of Jesus in Jesus' salvific and atoning life and death, while making it clear that his obedience was not effortless. Barth writes:

It is not self-evident that He [Jesus Christ] should be given this cup to drink and that He should take it upon Himself to drink it (Mark 14:36). This prayer is, as it were, a remarkable historical complement to the eternal decision taken in God Himself, one which was not taken easily but with great difficulty, one to which He won through, which He won from Himself. And, of course, the question of the crucified: Had God forsaken Him? (Mark 15:34), points even more strongly in the same direction ... Jesus must and will allow Himself to take the place which is presumably not His but theirs for the sake of righteousness in the supreme sense. This allowing was determined and effected in divine necessity and freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Barth explains how the innocent man from Nazareth reconciles God to humanity in an excursus that follows the life of Jesus from his baptism to the cross. As the Son of God who travels into the far country, Jesus Christ experiences life as other women and men experience life, and when he enters into the human condition he willingly and obediently faces the suffering and trials known to humanity. However, Jesus' commitment to obedience and his willingness to follow the will of God was unlike the obedience of other women and men. Although Jesus Christ was fully human, he was different from men and women in that he was obedient where men and women are disobedient. "In His likeness He was also unlike in that He did not yield to temptation."<sup>5</sup> In the flesh, Jesus Christ's obedience was a perfect obedience to the will of God the Father. "In His acts He was without sin. He was perfectly obedient."<sup>6</sup>

This obedience Barth illustrates by examining the temptations in the wilderness. Barth discusses each temptation Jesus encountered in the wilderness and analyzes the significance of Jesus' refusal to yield. In the first temptation Jesus was urged to change stones into food to satisfy his hunger. Barth explains:

What would it have meant if Jesus had yielded? He would have used the power of God which He undoubtedly had like a technical instrument placed at His disposal to save and maintain His own life ... He would have broken off His fasting and repentance in the fullness of divine power and with the help of God, but without consulting the will and commandment of God, because in the last resort His primary will was to live.<sup>7</sup>

The fact the Jesus refuses to satisfy his own hunger and steadfastly lives as one committed to the will of God illustrates Jesus' willing obedience to God the

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<sup>4</sup> IV/1, 238-239.

<sup>5</sup> IV/1, 260.

<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 260.

<sup>7</sup> IV/1, 261.



Father and His refusal to compromise or make decisions based on his personal discomfort and needs.

In the second temptation, Satan offers Jesus lordship over the world if Jesus worships him by falling down on His knees. Barth suggests that had Jesus done this, it would have illustrated that Jesus had not intended to complete the penitence begun at his baptism in the River Jordan and he would have ceased to recognise and confess the sin of the world. However, Jesus did not yield to this temptation and according to Barth, "As the one great sinner in the name and place of all others, without any prospect of this glory, quite unsuccessfully, indeed with the certainty of failure, He willed to continue worshipping and serving God alone."<sup>8</sup> This incident illustrates Jesus Christ's persistence in his obedience and his one desire to follow the will of God.

In the third temptation Satan suggests that Jesus leap from the top of the temple and allow God to save him. Barth views this as the most astonishing of the temptations because it would have "experimented with God for His [Jesus Christ's] own supreme pleasure and satisfaction instead of taking the purpose of God seriously and subjecting Himself to His good pleasure and command."<sup>9</sup> Barth explains the consequences had Jesus leapt: "If He had given way to this last and supreme temptation He would have committed the supreme sin of tempting God Himself, i.e., under the appearance of this most robust faith in Him demanding that He should accept this Jesus who believes so robustly instead of sinful man by Him and in His person."<sup>10</sup> This act would have had devastating consequences and would have nullified the possibility of Jesus Christ acting as the Judge and being the judged One in place of humanity. "In an act of supreme piety, in the work of a mystical enthusiasm, He would have betrayed justification before God."<sup>11</sup> Had Jesus leapt and trusted God to save him, Jesus would have used his own will in the act of jumping to manipulate God's will and action. Jesus Christ would have attempted to manipulate God's will for his own will and thus his dedicated obedience to the will of God would be in doubt.

The gospel accounts of Jesus Christ's refusal to yield to the temptations in the wilderness illustrate his complete obedience to the will of God and demonstrate the righteousness that was necessary in order that the reconciliation

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<sup>8</sup> IV/1, 262.

<sup>9</sup> IV/1, 263.

<sup>10</sup> IV/1, 263.

<sup>11</sup> IV/1, 263.

of humanity to God be achieved. Barth relates these temptations to Jesus' suffering at Gethsemane.

In this story [of Gethsemane] there is already compressed the whole happening of Good Friday to the extent that it already speaks of a passion of Jesus, but of a passion which has to do strictly with the establishment of His definitive willingness for the real passion which comes upon Him immediately after. In this respect the story forms the turning-point between the two parts of the whole Gospel record. It is now shown where the victory which Jesus won in the temptation in the wilderness leads, that the end will involve the death of the victor. The penitence and the fulfilment of the righteousness which Jesus has undertaken is now approaching its climax. The reversal in which the Judge becomes the judged is now about to take place.<sup>12</sup>

To analyse fully Jesus' prayerful obedience and suffering in Gethsemane, Barth compares this story to the temptations and then discusses the actions of Jesus in both stories. It is important to see how the temptations in the wilderness narrative differs from the actions in Gethsemane.

Barth begins the analysis by pointing out the change in demeanour of Jesus (Matthew 26:38 describes Jesus as "grieved even unto death") as he goes to the garden and asks his beloved disciples to pray with him. In the garden Jesus prays "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want," (Mark 14:36) and "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say – 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour" (John 12:27). Barth comments on a striking difference in the attitude of Jesus Christ in the garden scene and in the wilderness. "In the latter [in the wilderness] there is not even the remotest glimpse of any hesitation or questioning on the part of Jesus Himself. Self-evidently and with the greatest precision the tempter is at once resisted."<sup>13</sup> However in Gethsemane, Jesus is troubled and asks God to take away the cup that has been given to him. Barth asks, "What is the frightful thing which, according to these passages, He foresaw in His suffering and dying, which now forces Him to this terrified and shaken halt, to this question whether it really has to be, as had not been the case in the wilderness?"<sup>14</sup> According to Barth, in the garden Jesus Christ recognises that in his willing obedience, he has placed himself into the hands of humanity:

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<sup>12</sup> IV/1, 264. Moltmann also considers the Gethsemane narrative as the beginning of the passion of Jesus Christ: "With Christ's plea in Gethsemane, a plea which was not granted but was rejected through God's silence, his true passion begins: *his suffering from God*. Of course there was also his simple, human fear of pain. It would be cruel to maintain that as the Son of God Christ could not have felt any fear. But it would also be foolish to take him for a sensitive weakling, overwhelmed by self-pity at the thought of bodily torment and his approaching death," *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, 33.

<sup>13</sup> IV/1, 265.

<sup>14</sup> IV/1, 265.

It now came to him what that involved and carried with it, to what He had given Himself, the power of the unbreakable law to which these men are subject in their willing and doing, to which the world itself is subject, the overwhelming retribution which must come upon Him at the hand of these men because He has undertaken and dared to be unique amongst them, to resist temptation, to achieve righteousness in their place. He saw that in so doing He would not only be alone but would necessarily have them all against Him: those who had not resisted temptation, but constantly gave way to it; all who existed and acted as more or less useful instruments of the power of temptation and the tempter; who could act in relation to Jesus only in the service of the will and dominion of Satan.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus Christ views the events as they were about to unfold as the coming triumph of Satan through the acts of the men and women around him. This recognition of the power of sin over humanity and the course about to unfold causes Jesus Christ much pain and grief. Jesus Christ's desire is to see the will of God triumph, but it seems to him in the garden that it is the will of Satan that is dictating the events around him. In analysing this passage there are three points to consider.

First, it is important to note that Jesus is alone during his suffering in the garden and faces this difficult time without a companion or helper. Although Jesus wants the disciples to accompany him to the garden and requests that they stay awake during his time of prayer, they fall asleep and offer him no comfort or support. Barth explains:

It is not self-evident that He should be alone in this matter. He had called the disciples to be His apostles, the foundation of His community in the world. He had made His cause theirs ... Jesus knew – here we see directly the connection between the Gethsemane and the temptation in the wilderness– that what was about to happen would again mean temptation, that with the event which was about to break in all its malice there might come the suggestion of an easier way for Himself and His disciples than that which He had entered. That is why He Himself watches and prays in this hour. That is why He calls to His disciples.<sup>16</sup>

While in the garden, Jesus Christ is alone and there is no one there to support him with their presence or with prayers. According to the Gospel of John, in Gethsemane Jesus prays for humanity, which includes those that have failed to stay awake with him. Barth posits that the Gethsemane passage exemplifies Jesus Christ representing humanity “for us” as he prays in our place when others fail to stay awake and pray with him because of their human weakness. “[T]he act of God in Jesus Christ has absolutely nothing to correspond to it in the existence of those who believe in Him. They could not watch with Him even one hour. He alone watched and prayed in their place.”<sup>17</sup> When others failed to assist Jesus by staying awake with him, he obediently takes the burden himself and does what the others cannot do. This illustrates the weakness of humanity to accomplish

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<sup>15</sup> IV/1, 266.

<sup>16</sup> IV/1, 267.

<sup>17</sup> IV/1, 268.

obediently even the simple task of prayer, and the need for Jesus Christ to act for us and in our place.

The second point Barth raises is that Jesus Christ prays to God even though the answer can only be given as series of events. Barth says this is not a conversation between the obedient Son and God the Father, in which Jesus Christ speaks and God replies. The answer Jesus seeks can only be found in the events of the following hours and days. Barth argues:

God will give His answer to the prayer only in this inconceivable, this frightful event, and not otherwise. For the event of His resurrection lies beyond the answer. It is the disclosure of its meaning. The answer which Jesus receives is in itself this and no other ... The answer of God was identical with the action of Satan. That was the frightful thing. The coincidence of the divine and the satanic will and work and word was the problem of this hour, the darkness in which Jesus addressed God in Gethsemane.<sup>18</sup>

According to Barth, this realisation that the will and work of Satan is about to triumph causes Jesus Christ great suffering and anxiety. Jesus is not afraid of death and is not afraid of what he believes will soon happen to him by the hands of those around him. Jesus prays to God, but he must wait for the answer to his prayers as the events work out before him.

Third, Barth analyzes the content of Jesus Christ's prayer in Gethsemane in light of his distress that the will of evil appears to be triumphing over the will of God. In explaining Jesus' prayer to God the Father that the cup be passed, Barth comments:

He prays that God should not give Him up to the power the temptation of which He had resisted and willed to resist in all circumstances. He prays that God will so order things that the triumph of evil will be prevented, that the claim of Satan to world dominion will not be affirmed but given the lie, that a limit will be sent to him, and with him to the evil course of the world and the evil movement of men ... He prays that for the sake of God's own cause and glory the evil determination of world-occurrence should not finally rage against Himself, the sent One of God and the divine Son.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus Christ seeks to obey the will of God even as the events around him lead him to wonder whether it is the will of God or the will of Satan being done. According to Barth:

What shook Him was the coming concealment of the lordship of God under the lordship of evil and evil men. This was the terrible thing which He saw breaking in on Himself and His disciples and all men, on His work as the Reconciler between God

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<sup>18</sup> IV/1, 268.

<sup>19</sup> IV/1, 269. Richard John Neuhaus agrees, stating, "In the sweated prayer of the garden of Gethsemane, and perhaps at other times in his earthly life, he agonized over the will of God. It was not the agony of the conflicted self resisting the will of God, but the agony of the abandoned self seeking to discern the will of God," *Death on a Friday Afternoon* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 132.

and man, and therefore on God's own work, destroying everything, mortally imperilling the fulfilment of His just and redemptive judgement.<sup>20</sup>

Although he is terrified by the events he is watching unfold and confused by the seeming triumph of evil, Jesus Christ is steadfast in his determination to follow the will of God.

Barth notes this prayer and anguish in Gethsemane is not a withdrawal on the part of Jesus Christ, but "it is an expression of the supreme and only praise which God expects of man and which is rendered to Him only by this One man in place of all, the praise which comes from the knowledge that He does not make any mistakes, that His way ... is holy and just and gracious."<sup>21</sup> In this narrative Jesus Christ is accepting, affirming, and obedient to the will of God, even though he is unsure of the outcome. Barth states that Jesus is not only fearful of the suffering and death he is about to encounter, but is fearful "of the dreadful thing that He saw coming upon Him in and with His suffering and dying."<sup>22</sup> He is concerned over the "matter of divine judgement being taken out of the hands of Jesus and placed in those of His supremely unrighteous judges and executed by them upon Him."<sup>23</sup> Although Barth explicitly states that Jesus Christ suffers emotionally during the Gethsemane narratives, for Barth, the significance of this narrative is that Jesus Christ obediently accepts the will of God. He prays for "thy will to be done" which means, "that He put this cup to His lips, that He accepted this answer of God as true and holy and just and gracious, that He went forward to what was about to come, thus enabling it to happen."<sup>24</sup> Jesus Christ prays for the will of God to happen, and trusts that the upcoming events might lead to the fulfilment of God's plan, however painful the events may be, and however evil the events might seem.

The obedience of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane is illustrated in his desire to follow the will of God. But for Barth, the garden narrative is the place where "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21) It here that the cup of wrath, which judges the sins of humanity, is given to Jesus Christ to carry to the cross. Barth argues:

In the power of this prayer [at Gethsemane] Jesus received, i.e., He renewed, confirmed and put into effect, His freedom to finish His work, to execute the divine

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<sup>20</sup> IV/1, 269.

<sup>21</sup> IV/1, 271.

<sup>22</sup> IV/1, 271.

<sup>23</sup> IV/1, 271.

<sup>24</sup> IV/1, 271.



judgement by undergoing it Himself, to punish the sin of the world by bearing it Himself, by taking it away from the world in His own person, in His death. *The sin of the world was now laid upon Him.* It was now true that in the series of many sinners He was the only One singled out by God to be its bearer and Representative, the only One that it could really touch and oppress and terrify ... This was the will of God in the dreadful thing which Jesus saw approaching – in that conjunction of the will and work and word of God with those of evil. The power of evil had to break on Jesus, its work of death had to be done on Him, so that being done on Him it might be done once and for all.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus Christ becomes the sin of humanity and men and women are made righteous.

In Christ we are made the righteousness of God as Christ was made sin for us. To be made the righteousness of God means (as the positive complement to Christ's being made sin) being put in a place or status in which we are right with God, in which we are pleasing and acceptable to Him in which we have already been received by Him, in which we are no more and no less right than God Himself is right.<sup>26</sup>

Barth is not unique in his teaching that Jesus Christ became the sin of the world. Luther also thought that in order for the atonement to be effective that Jesus Christ became the sins of humanity. He states, "we are sinners and thieves, and therefore we are worthy of death and eternal damnation. But Christ took all our sins upon Himself, and for them He died on the cross."<sup>27</sup> Luther writes of Jesus Christ, "He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body – not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood."<sup>28</sup> Von Balthasar also views the Gethsemane narrative with the same understanding. He states that in the garden the "hour" and the "chalice" became "the entry of the sin of the world into the personal existence, body and soul, of the representative Substitute and Mediator."<sup>29</sup> Von Balthasar understands that "the Cross is the full achievement of the divine judgement on 'sin' (2 Cor. 5:21) summed up, dragged into the daylight and suffered through in the Son."<sup>30</sup> Barth explains, "The story at

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<sup>25</sup> IV/1, 271-272, emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> IV/1, 75. J. B. Torrance explains the significance of this, "The act of God in Christ for us, and the act of man in Christ for us are inseparable. Together they teach the substitutionary character of the atonement. *Anhypostasia* emphasizes that God substitutes Himself for us. *Enhypostasia* emphasizes that the man Jesus is substituted for us. This is the doctrine of 'the wonderful exchange' (*mirifica commutatio*) taught by the Reformers," in "The Priesthood of Jesus," 169.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 26 (St Louis: Concordia Press, 1963), 277.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, 277.

<sup>29</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 101. He explains: "It does not suffice (precisely because of this confrontation of the narrative with the soteriological reflection) to argue from the unique 'dignity' of the substitutionary person, and his innocence and freedom, in order to make acceptable the reality of his work of atonement (whether ontological or forensic). It is much more important to offer a deepened description of how the hypostatic union constitutes the condition of possibility of a real assumption of universal guilt," *Mysterium Paschale*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 119.

Gethsemane ... shows two things: first that we have to do with His genuine human decision; and second, that it is a decision of obedience.”<sup>31</sup> Jesus Christ accepts that which is about to happen, bears the judgement for sin of the world, and submits the divine judgement of death upon the cross where the reconciliation of God and humanity is accomplished. Barth states:

because He in whom God was present and active, He who knew no sin took our place and status, caused our situation to be His, accepted solidarity with us sinners, in so doing He made our place and status as sinners quite impossible. For in so doing He has finally judged sin in our place and status, i.e., He has done away with it as our human possibility ... In that He took our place, and was made sin for us, we are made the righteousness of God in Him, because we are put in His place.<sup>32</sup>

Because Jesus Christ becomes the sin of humanity it can no longer belong to men and women. “He is the man who entered that evil way, with the result that we are forced from it; it can be ours no longer.”<sup>33</sup>

Like Barth, von Balthasar compares the temptation in the wilderness to the garden of Gethsemane narrative and explains that it is important to recognise the identity of the participant in each event in order to understand their theological significance of their relation of the events to the lives of other men and women. According to von Balthasar:

in contra-distinction to what happened in the Temptations, the entire Passion proceeds without reference to the Devil. The whole story of the Passion passes him by, played out, as it is, between the Father and the Son. What matters in it is the bearing away of the sin of the world (John 1:29). By that event, the enemy power is ‘disarmed’ (Colossians 2:15) without the appearance of struggle against it.<sup>34</sup>

Although Jesus Christ was innocent, sinless and perfect in obedience, we must remember Jesus Christ’s divine and human natures and understand the event of atonement as a human event experienced by the Logos as a human. Barth’s doctrine of God and the identity of Trinity must provide the basis for understanding the event of the cross as an experience which is eternally elected by God.

He is the Lord as He fulfils the work which He has undertaken for us, the work of His own deepest humiliation. He has the omnipotence in the power of this work to bear our sins, to bear them away from us, to suffer the consequences of our sins ... This is all a sovereign action. It is completed and its meaning is revealed in the passion of Christ on the cross. Even on the cross it is a divine act ... The passion and the cross are therefore to be understood as His action.<sup>35</sup>

Barth cites the garden narrative as an example of obedient prayer by which the submission of the human will to the will of God is necessary and proper. In

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<sup>31</sup> IV/1, 166.

<sup>32</sup> IV/1, 74.

<sup>33</sup> IV/1, 236.

<sup>34</sup> Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 106-107.

<sup>35</sup> IV/1, 235.

*Church Dogmatics* volume III/4, while discussing the doctrine of creation and humanity's freedom before God, Barth discusses the purpose of prayer and the proper procedures for prayer. Barth is critical of prayers offered by men and women that ask God only for favourable outcomes of personal situations. Barth explains, "Do not Genesis 32:24ff (Jacob's wrestling at Jabbok) and Matthew 26:36-44 (Jesus' wrestling in Gethsemane) clearly show us that with this will – the willing of the submission of our will which is the true and practical meaning of prayer – all our feeble asking is condemned to silence?"<sup>36</sup> Barth explains that the basis of prayer is humanity's freedom before God, and that the permission to pray, given to humanity by God, becomes an order and command, and therefore a necessity. Barth discusses the attitudes of women and men in prayer:

He [humans] always understands God as the unique source of all good and himself as absolutely needy in relation to Him. He puts himself joyfully under this fundamental law of the covenant relationship. He has nothing either to represent or to present to God except himself as the one who has to receive all things from Him.<sup>37</sup>

Humanity is to approach God's command of prayer as a time for obediently submitting to the will of God and as a continuing opportunity for discerning the will of God. Barth views Jesus Christ's action in Gethsemane as a model of proper obedient prayerful behaviour, rather than as a model of someone (bravely) suffering and encountering significant distress.

While Barth points to Gethsemane as an example of Jesus Christ obediently following the will of God, Moltmann understands it differently. David Lauber notes:

For Moltmann, Gethsemane depicts an opposition and conflict of wills – the will of the Son, Jesus Christ, and the will of God the Father. In the end, the Father refuses the desire of the Son, and the Father's will prevails over the Son's ... For Barth, the petitionary prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane does not indicate a conflict of wills; rather, it clearly depicts a unity of wills. Throughout his entire obedient life Jesus' will is to do the will of the Father.<sup>38</sup>

Where Barth explains that Jesus Christ's death on the cross reconciles humanity to God through the judgement of sin, Moltmann stresses that Jesus "Christ entered into this humiliation and forsakenness so that he could become a brother for the humiliated and forsaken, and bring them God's kingdom. He doesn't help through supernatural miracles. He helps by virtue of his own suffering – through his

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<sup>36</sup> III/4, 92.

<sup>37</sup> III/4, 97.

<sup>38</sup> Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell*, 118.

wounds.”<sup>39</sup> Barth and Moltmann also differ on their understanding on how the cross affects the lives of men and women.

## **B. Barth and Moltmann on the efficacy of the cross**

According to Barth, because of sin, men and women are subject to a “hopeless destiny in death.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore it is necessary that Jesus Christ experiences death if reconciliation is to occur. Barth explains that, in Jesus Christ, God:

fulfils it – as man in our place – by completing our work in the omnipotence of the divine Son, by treading the way of sinners to its bitter end in death, in destruction, in the limitless anguish of separation from God, by delivering up sinful man and sin in His own person to the non-being which is properly theirs, the non-being, the nothingness to which man has fallen victim as sinner and towards which he relentlessly hastens.<sup>41</sup>

The death of Jesus Christ has radical consequences for men and women. Barth explains, “That Jesus Christ died for us does not mean, therefore, that we do not have to die, but that we have died in and with him, that as the people we were we have been done away and destroyed, that we are no longer there and have no more future.”<sup>42</sup> This is not just figurative speech for Barth.

For then and there, in the person of Christ taking our place, we were present, being crucified and dying with Him. We died. This has to be understood quite concretely and literally. In His dying, the dying which awaits us in the near or distant future was already comprehended and completed, so that we no longer die to ourselves (Romans 14:2f), in our own strength and at our own risk, but only in Him, enclosed in His death.<sup>43</sup>

Barth views Jesus Christ’s death on the cross as something that God elected in eternity to experience in order to reconcile men and women and restore the covenant that was broken by human sin.

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<sup>39</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 51. In another work Moltmann states a similar view: “Christ entered into this humiliation and forsakenness so that he could become a brother for the humiliated and forsaken, and bring them God’s kingdom. He doesn’t help through supernatural miracles. He helps by virtue of his own suffering – through his wounds,” *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> IV/1, 253.

<sup>41</sup> IV/1, 253.

<sup>42</sup> IV/1, 295. Lauber correctly states that, according to Barth, “Jesus Christ does not die the death of a perfect and innocent human being; rather, Jesus Christ bears the world’s sin and in turn endures the punishment that follows from this sin,” *Barth on the Descent into Hell*, 20. Lauber also notes that in III/2, Barth discusses human death and posits out that Jesus Christ’s death as judgement is unique because it also includes a “second death” or “eternal death,” 21. Lauber states explains that “What hangs over all humanity as a terrifying threat, namely, eternal corruption, in actuality fell upon Jesus Christ in his death,” 23.

<sup>43</sup> IV/1, 295. Richard John Neuhaus agrees stating that in the cry of abandonment and in the event of the cross, “God is present in his apparent absence ... God is present in the forsaken so that nobody – nobody ever, nobody anywhere at any time under any circumstances – is forsaken,” *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, 142.

Moltmann, however, looks to Good Friday to comprehend the suffering of the world. According to Moltmann, Jesus Christ reconciles the world because he is a victim.

According to the New Testament, Christ does not only become the Brother of the victims. He becomes the one who atones for the guilty too. 'Thou who bearest the suffering of the world': that is for the victims. 'Thou who bearest the sins of the world': that is for the ones who have committed the wrong. As long as this world endures, God bears not only the world's history of suffering but its history of human wrong and injustice too. In the crucified Christ, God himself is the victim among victims.<sup>44</sup>

The tension here is that Moltmann focuses solely on the wrong of humans to each other and fails to articulate the significance of the sins of men and women against God that also creates the need for the judgement of God and the restoration of the covenant through the death of Jesus Christ. This focus on the victimisation and forsakenness of Jesus Christ has implications for Moltmann's understanding of the resurrection. Richard Bauckham argues:

The Good Friday of Jesus' godforsakenness corresponds to, is even inclusive of, the universal Good Friday of the world's godforsakenness. Not that Moltmann infers the godforsakenness of Jesus from the godforsakenness of the world; on the contrary it is the former which brings the latter to light.<sup>45</sup>

He explains that this "universalising of the historical Good Friday makes *resurrection* a necessary prospect for all that is, so that the 'death of God' can become an element in the dialectical process of God."<sup>46</sup> This necessity of the resurrection and the universalising of Good Friday, combined with the eschatological emphasis, illustrate how Moltmann's understanding of the death of Jesus Christ differs from that of Barth. Barth emphasizes that sin was judged in the event of the cross and reconciliation occurred between God and humanity, and that humanity may participate in the life of God through the Spirit now that the covenant has been restored and Jesus Christ's righteousness is given to them. Moltmann argues that men and women can participate in the eschatological redemption because Jesus Christ participates in suffering with humanity. Bauckham argues that for Moltmann, "All humanity in its guilt and suffering and godlessness is in the suffering and dying Christ, and so all human history is taken up into the history of God and integrated into the future of God in its openness to the new creation."<sup>47</sup> Men and women participate in the life of Jesus Christ and have hope in the future redemption of creation when they come to understand his

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<sup>44</sup> Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, 41.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross," in *SJT*, 30:4 (1977), 302.

<sup>46</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross," 303.

<sup>47</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross," 310.



suffering on the cross as God's love for the godforsaken. This difference between Barth and Moltmann concerning the salvific efficacy of the cross is illustrated by comparing how they understand the connection between the event of the cross on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday.

### C. Barth and Moltmann on the "for us" and "in our place"

Although the judgement of Jesus Christ restores humanity by occurring for us and in our place, Barth draws attention to the reality of the cross for Jesus Christ and for men and women. He writes:

the fact that God has given Himself in His Son to suffer the divine judgement on us men does not mean that it is not executed on us but that it is executed on us in full earnest and in all its reality – really and definitively because He Himself took our place in it. That Jesus Christ died for us does not mean, therefore, that we do not have to die, but that we have died in and with Him, that as the people we were we have been done away and destroyed.<sup>48</sup>

Humanity is restored by the "for us" and "in our place" death of Jesus Christ, but the death of Jesus Christ is not an event that takes place in isolation from men and women. According to Barth, "It took place once and for all on Golgotha. We were there, for there took place the dying of the Son of God for us ... For then and there, in the person of Christ taking our place, we were present, being crucified and dying with Him. We died."<sup>49</sup> Barth does not mean this occurred only symbolically. "This has to be understood quite concretely and literally. In His dying, the dying which awaits us in the near or distant future was already comprehended and completed, so that we can no longer die to ourselves, in our own strength and at our own risk, but only in Him, enclosed in His death."<sup>50</sup> Because our death and reconciliation occurs in the event of the cross and the death of Jesus Christ it has been done effectively and completely, and therefore needs no completion or further action.

Barth explains that although the event of the cross does not need further action, men and women may respond:

The confession of Christians, their suffering, their repentance, their prayer, their humility, their works, baptism, too, and the Lord's Supper can and should attest to this

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<sup>48</sup> IV/1, 294-295.

<sup>49</sup> IV/1, 295.

<sup>50</sup> IV/1, 295. Moltmann says of the crucifixion: "God is unconditional love, because he takes on himself grief at the contradiction in men and does not angrily suppress this contradiction. God allows himself to be crucified and is crucified, and in this consummates his unconditional love that is so full of hope. But this means that in the cross he becomes himself the condition of this love ... It [the fact of God's love] can be crucified, but in crucifixion it finds its fulfilment and becomes love of the enemy," Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 248.

event but only attest to it. The event itself, the event of the death of man, is that of the death of Jesus Christ on Golgotha ... This is the one *mysterium*, the one sacrament, and the one existential fact before and beside and after which there is no room for any other of the same rank.<sup>51</sup>

The sacramental character of the cross for Barth means that the event of the cross is the one and unique means of grace and the event that reconciles God to humanity.<sup>52</sup>

Men and women are not left unchanged by the cross. Barth states that “we must be clear that this event as such has the character of a catastrophe breaking in man, and that the grace of God effective and revealed in it has indeed the form of a judgement executed on man.”<sup>53</sup> It is the gracious and eternal decision of God to reconcile the world through the event of the cross. Barth argues:

If the faithfulness of God and the love of God toward him [humanity] in Jesus Christ was to attain its goal, it had in fact to have the form of the consuming fire of His wrath, burning down to the very foundation, consuming and totally destroying the man himself who had become the enemy of God.<sup>54</sup>

This is what occurs when Jesus Christ becomes the judged one:

The ‘for us’ of His death on the cross includes and encloses this terrible ‘against us’. Without this terrible ‘against us’ it would not be the divine and holy and redemptive and effectively helpful ‘for us’ in which the conversion of man and the world to God has become an event.<sup>55</sup>

Barth emphasizes the importance of understanding the event of the cross as a historical event and its influence for all humanity. “In the fulfilment of the Self-humiliation of God, in the obedience of the Son, Jesus Christ has suffered judgement, death and end in our place, the Judge who Himself was judged, and who thereby has also judged. In His person, with Him, judgement, death and end have come to us ourselves once and for all.”<sup>56</sup> We fail to comprehend the event of the cross and the love and grace of God if we fail to recognise the significance of what occurs as Jesus Christ obediently bears the sins of humanity in our place and effectively changes our status as participants in fellowship with God.

Moltmann understands Jesus Christ’s “for us” differently. Looking at the roles of both Jesus the Son and God the Father he explains:

The Son suffers in his love being forsaken by the Father as he dies. The Father suffers in his love the grief of the death of the Son. In that case, whatever proceeds from the event between the Father and the Son must be understood as the spirit of surrender of

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<sup>51</sup> IV/1, 296.

<sup>52</sup> IV/1, 296.

<sup>53</sup> IV/1, 296.

<sup>54</sup> IV/1, 296.

<sup>55</sup> IV/1, 296.

<sup>56</sup> IV/1, 296.

the Father and the Son, as the spirit which creates love for forsaken men, as the spirit which brings the dead alive.<sup>57</sup>

According to Moltmann, the salvific benefit from the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is that both God the Father and God the Son experience suffering and in that suffering a spirit creates love for suffering humanity. "It is the unconditioned and therefore boundless love which proceeds from the grief of the Father and the dying Son and reaches forsaken men in order to create in them the possibility and force of new life."<sup>58</sup> Reconciliation, for Moltmann, is the possibility of new life for men and women when they recognise that God has experienced suffering too.

The concrete 'history of God' in the death of Jesus on the cross on Golgotha ... contains within itself all the depths and abysses of human history and therefore can be understood as the history of history ... Therefore there is no life, no fortune and no joy which has not been integrated by his history into eternal life and eternal joy in God.<sup>59</sup>

Moltmann asks, "what is salvation? Only if all disaster, forsakenness by God, absolute death, the infinite curse of damnation and sinking into nothingness is in God himself, is community with this God eternal salvation, infinite joy, indestructible election and divine life."<sup>60</sup> Humanity finds hope, peace and joy in the fact that God suffers in Jesus Christ on the cross. According to Moltmann, Jesus Christ's suffering provides meaning and hope to men and women currently enduring suffering. Lewis remarks that "Moltmann came to scholarly prominence precisely by opposing to Barth's masterful 'already' of primal decision a more hesitant but profoundly hopeful 'not yet' of the world's continued unredemption."<sup>61</sup> Moltmann argues:

For eschatological faith, the trinitarian God-event on the cross becomes the history of God which is open to the future and which opens up the future. Its present is called reconciliation with grief in love and its eschaton the filling of all mortal flesh with the spirit and all that is dead with this love.<sup>62</sup>

The suffering God "for us" in Moltmann's theology provides hope for men and women. "Just as we participate actively and passively in the sufferings of God, so too will we participate in the joy of God wherever we love and pray and hope."<sup>63</sup> The differences in understanding Jesus Christ as "for us" and "in our place" in the writings of Barth and Moltmann is connected to how they understand the relationship between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

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<sup>57</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 245.

<sup>58</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 245.

<sup>59</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246.

<sup>60</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 216.

<sup>62</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 255.

<sup>63</sup> Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 255.

#### **D. The relationship between the cross and the resurrection**

Barth understands the events of the cross and resurrection as separate and distinct, yet united. The death of Jesus Christ was “wholly and altogether the work of God to the extent that it is the judgement of death fulfilled on the Representative of all other men appointed by God.”<sup>64</sup> However, even as “the judgement of God” it has a “component of human action – both obedient and good on the one hand and disobedient and evil on the other” as Barth argues that although it was the will of God, the disciples and the political and religious leaders had a role in the “work of the sinful men who put into effect the decision and will of God”.<sup>65</sup> For Barth, the resurrection is different because “it does not have in the very least this component of human willing and activity.”<sup>66</sup> The resurrection is completely a sovereign act of God when on Easter Sunday Jesus Christ “came amongst them again in such a way that His presence as the man He had been was and could be exclusively and therefore unequivocally the act of God without any component of human will and action.”<sup>67</sup> The resurrection is an act of God that serves to confirm what happened on the cross through the death of Jesus Christ. For Barth, Jesus Christ’s “raising, His resurrection His new life, confirmed His death.”<sup>68</sup> It is “a second act of justice after the first to the extent that it was the divine approval and acknowledgment of the obedience given by Jesus Christ, the acceptance of His sacrifice, the proclamation and bringing into force of the consequences, the saving consequences, of His action and passion in our place.”<sup>69</sup> According to Barth, God justifies Himself:

in the revelation of His faithfulness as the Father of this Son, in the revelation of the love with which He loved Him from all eternity and all along His way into the far country, at Jordan and in the wilderness and in Gethsemane, and never more than when the Son asked Him on the cross whether He had forsaken Him, and when He then cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> IV/1, 300.

<sup>65</sup> IV/1, 300.

<sup>66</sup> IV/1, 300.

<sup>67</sup> IV/1, 302.

<sup>68</sup> IV/1, 305.

<sup>69</sup> IV/1, 305. As Barth discusses the resurrection he uses the cry from the cross to explain how God could have judged sinful humanity in the event of the cross and stopped there. According to Barth, “The saying: ‘My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?’ shows us how close was this frightful possibility. It might have been that God turned away His face finally from us,” IV/1, 306.

<sup>70</sup> IV/1, 308. Barth explains how God is justified in the event of the resurrection: “His whole eternal love would still have been His even if He had acquiesced in His death as the Judge who was judged, if His mission had concluded at that ninth hour of Good Friday, if it had been completed with His fulfilling and suffering in His own person the No of the divine wrath on the world. But then, like His right as Creator and Lord of the world, it would have been, and remained, a completely hidden love: without witness, without participants, because without

Because the resurrection is “the great verdict of God, the fulfilment and proclamation of God’s decision concerning the event of the cross,” Barth understands the events as separate, yet united.<sup>71</sup> He explains:

They belong together in that in these two events of God with and after one another there is effective and expressed the Yes of the reconciling God – the Yes fulfilled and proclaimed by the one Jesus Christ, first in His act of obedience in our place, then – again in our place – as the first recipient of the grace of God the Father.<sup>72</sup>

Barth explains how the two events occurred in history and how they relate to the lives of men and women today. “The old, the former thing, has passed away: the new has come, has grown, has been created. It is ‘in Christ’ – the Crucified and Risen – and Christ is in it. In His death its own death and that of the world is, in fact, already past, and in His life its own and that of the future world is before it.”<sup>73</sup> Barth explains:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ tells us – and it is decided in this second divine act, the act of God fulfilled in His verdict – that as the Crucified ‘He lives and reigns to all eternity’ (Luther), that as the One who was, having been buried, He is not of the past, He did not continue to be enclosed in the limits of the time between His birth and death, but as the One who was in this time He became and is the Lord of all time, eternal as God Himself is eternal, and therefore present in all time.<sup>74</sup>

This means that Jesus Christ acts as the Mediator between humanity and God even today. “He not only did represent us, He does represent us. He not only did bear the sin of the world, but He does bear it. He not only has reconciled the world with God, but as the One who has done this, He is its eternal Reconciler, active and at work once and for all.”<sup>75</sup> Barth explicitly asks, “How does the atonement made then and there come to us and become our atonement?” and answers:

Jesus Christ as the Son who was obedient to the Father and offered Himself and reconciled the world and us with God is in eternity and therefore today now, at this very hour, our active and effective Representative and Advocate before God, and therefore the real basis of our justification and hope ... There is no moment in which this perfect tense is not a present.<sup>76</sup>

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proclamation, without outward confirmation and form, concealed in the mystery of the inner life and being of the Godhead. It pleased God, however, to justify Himself, that is, to reveal and give force and effect to His faithfulness and love in this supreme sense by an ὀρίζεν [declaration/revelation] of His Son which the disciples of Jesus could see and hear and grasp, and which was ordained to be publicly proclaimed ... He willed to give the inner and secret radiance of His glory an outward radiance in the sphere of creation and its history. He willed to give His eternal life space and time. And that is what He did when He called Jesus Christ to life from the dead,” IV/1, 308.

<sup>71</sup> IV/1, 309.

<sup>72</sup> IV/1, 309.

<sup>73</sup> IV/1, 311. Barth is referring to 1 Cor. 5:17, Romans 8:10, and Revelation 21:4ff.

<sup>74</sup> IV/1, 313.

<sup>75</sup> IV/1, 313.

<sup>76</sup> IV/1, 314-315. Hunsinger explains why this understanding of the perfect tense is important: “Either salvation is a perfect actuality in Christ to be received and partaken of for what it is, or else it is an existential possibility that does not become fully actual and complete until the church



Barth explains how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are to be understood in time. The crucifixion and resurrection are held together in “the unity of sequence” and are compared to a one-way street that cannot be reversed.<sup>77</sup>

According to Barth:

The crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ took place once. As this happening once it stands eternally before God and it is the basis and truth of the alteration of the human situation willed and brought about by God: from sin to righteousness, from captivity to freedom, from lying to truth, from death to life, our conversion to Him. For that reason the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ does not ever take place again. But the life of the Resurrected as the life of the Crucified, as it began in that Easter period, and needs no new beginning, is an eternal life, a life which is also continuous in time. And that means that God, and we too, have to do with the Crucified only as the Resurrected, with the one event of His death only as it has the continuing form of His life.<sup>78</sup>

This means that “there is no going back behind Easter morning.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, “we are invited, indeed required, to accept this [the judgement of sin in Christ’s death] as something that has happened for us and to us, in order that we may go forward with this decision already behind us.”<sup>80</sup> According to Barth:

What we have to do is simply to take this consequence as our starting point, to enjoy this Sabbath rest with Him as those who hear the message of Easter Day and are obedient to the verdict of the Holy Spirit pronounced there, praying that it may daily be disclosed afresh to us, looking forward in hope to the consummation of His *parousia* and therefore to our redemption, which is grounded in our reconciliation with God as it has already taken place on His cross, which has already begun in His resurrection, in which the disciples beheld His glory.<sup>81</sup>

For Barth, men and women are already reconciled to God through the event of the cross, yet they still await the final redemption that will happen at the second coming of Christ at the end time. Barth’s emphasis on the there and then which is

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happens to receive it. If salvation is essentially in the perfect tense, then its present and future tenses must be seen as modes of receiving and participating in the one salvation already accomplished in Christ. If, on the other hand, salvation occurs essentially in the present tense, then its present and future tenses must somehow supplement and complete a process that Christ initiated in his earthly existence, but did not entirely fulfil,” in “Robert Jenson’s *Systematic Theology*: a review essay,” in *SJT*, 55:2 (2002), 166.

<sup>77</sup> IV/1, 343.

<sup>78</sup> IV/1, 343-344. John Calvin similarly writes that “we divide the substance of our salvation between Christ’s death and resurrection as follows: through his death, sin was wiped out and death extinguished; through his resurrection, righteousness was restored and life raised up, so that – thanks to his resurrection – his death manifested power and efficacy in us,” *Institutes*, II.xvi.12.

<sup>79</sup> IV/1, 344. Barth explains the implications this should have for our Passion Week services and liturgical rites. He states that “all theologies or pieties or exercises or aesthetics which centre upon the cross – however grimly in earnest they may be – must be repudiated at once,” 344. We cannot for one moment forget that Jesus Christ lives. According to Barth, God “is stern in that He prevents us from going back or looking back, demanding that we should take up our little cross – our cross, not His – and follow Him, but follow Him where He Himself has long since carried His own, by way of Golgotha to the throne of God, to lay it down there with all the sin and guilt of the whole world, with our death, and to receive in our name as the obedient Son of the Father the grace of everlasting life,” 345. We are to accept this divine act of reconciliation and go forward as reconciled children of God.

<sup>80</sup> IV/1, 345.

<sup>81</sup> IV/1, 345-346.

effective now in the present is very different from Moltmann's view that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are only promises for a future consummation. Barth explains that because the event of the cross and the resurrection occurred in history and are effective now, the situation of men and women has been altered.

In virtue of the divine right established in the death of Jesus Christ, in virtue of the justification which has come to them in His resurrection, they are no longer what they were but they are already what they are to be. They are no longer the enemies of God, but His friends and children.<sup>82</sup>

To understand how the then and there of Jesus Christ is connected to the here and now of men and women one must turn to Barth's explanation of Jesus Christ as the true Witness.

As and because the living Jesus Christ is present and active in our sphere, it is the theatre of a final and supreme development of the disruption and destruction already overcome in Him, and of increased obduracy on the part of the man of sin who is now seriously challenged and alarmed by his displacement as already effected in Him.<sup>83</sup>

Individual men and women are "under the promise of the Spirit to participate in reconciliation as an active subject, namely as a recipient and bearer of the Word of reconciliation."<sup>84</sup> Although reconciliation has occurred in Jesus Christ, Barth recognises the continuing presence of evil:

Evil is still allowed to run this dangerous course in order that the glory which God has secured by what he has done in Jesus Christ may be increased and truly magnified in the conflict waged personally by the same Victor of Gethsemane and Golgotha in the time and history now hurrying to their goal and end.<sup>85</sup>

Jesus Christ is present among us here and now. "He [Jesus] first must still take up and carry His cross. The Jesus who lives and is among us in our time is the One who is still harassed and forsaken, accused and condemned, despised and smitten."<sup>86</sup> Although Jesus Christ is known completely only by God, he is revealed to humanity in his suffering. "He is a mystery to us. In His prophetic work on earth, in time, He is concealed in this pure form and exists among and for

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<sup>82</sup> IV/1, 316. McDowell explains the eschatological implications of humanity's justification in Jesus Christ: "it is in Christ, and the eschatological existence that he has vicariously opened up for human beings, that Barth speaks of the ontological impossibility of godlessness ... humanity cannot evade, or be lost to, God. Even in sin, humanity still belongs to God, because of his original determination in Christ," in "Learning Where to Place One's Hope," in *SJT*, 53:3 (2000), 336.

<sup>83</sup> IV/3, 392.

<sup>84</sup> IV/3, 392.

<sup>85</sup> IV/3, 393. Barth notes (similar to Moltmann) that it is Jesus Christ the crucified One who lives and reigns: "This negative determination of our time and history, which is not without but according to the will of God, carries with it the implication that the form in which Jesus Christ the Victor is on the way with us, accompanying and encountering us, should be none other than that of the Victor of Gethsemane and Golgotha, and therefore of the suffering Servant of God, the afflicted Prophet," IV/3, 393.

<sup>86</sup> IV/3, 393.

us in the form of suffering in which the pure form is at work.”<sup>87</sup> Although Jesus Christ is revealed and yet concealed, men and women can have confidence that he continues to mediate and act for us. Barth states, “Jesus Christ has once and for all taken our need to heart. This was His passion. But although He did it once and for all, He did not do it once only. Risen from the dead, He lives and takes it to heart with undiminished severity. This is His passion today. And it is thus that He is the true Witness.”<sup>88</sup>

Barth maintains that it is from within this dialectical tension between the already completed act of reconciliation in Jesus Christ and the not yet of the promised future redemption of the world that Christians live and participate in the life of God. Within this tension between the already completed act of reconciliation and hopeful anticipation of the coming final redemption men and women are called to live as reconciled children of God and respond to the love of God in prayer and thanksgiving. The next chapter explores the human participation in the life of God which is made possible through the reconciling event of Jesus Christ’s death upon the cross.

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<sup>87</sup> IV/3, 395. It is important to note that in this discussion of the present yet concealed crucified Lord, Barth mentions the importance of the Christian community. “In practice at least, it is to be noted that a living Christianity has always in its hymns and prayers, and above all in its administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, experienced and seen and understood and expounded and proclaimed His presence within it and the world as the presence of the Crucified,” IV/3, 395.

<sup>88</sup> IV/3, 396.

**Section Three-**  
**The Cross and Ethics**

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Event of the Cross and Human Participation**

The event of the cross not only reveals God to humanity and reconciles humanity to God, but for Barth, the event of the cross elicits a response and makes possible the participation of men and women in God.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will explore the relationship between the cross and Christian ethics and the relationship between justification and sanctification. Then it will discuss Barth's understanding of the divine command. Finally, this chapter will analyse Barth's writings concerning baptism.

#### **A. the cross and Christian ethics<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The term participation must be defined. McCormack explains that according to Barth, "The 'exaltation' of the human occurs in and through a history – the history of Jesus Christ. It is not the consequence of a metaphysically-conceived 'indwelling' of the divine on the part of the human; it is the consequence of a human participation in a concrete history in which both the 'essence' of God and the 'essence' of the human are – in a sense yet to be established – *made real*. Thus, the link which 'joins' divine 'essence' to human 'essence' is not an abstract doctrine of being but rather a *history*; if human 'exaltation' takes place in the same history as that in which the 'essence' of God is made real, then one can speak meaningfully of a participation in the divine 'essence'," in "Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question," in *Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge zur Gotteslehre*, hg. von I. Dalferth, J. Fischer und H.-P. Großhans (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 349.

McCormack notes, "Because election is, concretely the election of Jesus Christ and the election of ourselves only 'in Him,' the problem of participation must be handled Christologically," 352. The participation of the human with the divine consists in the human being exalted, not on the basis of penetration. McCormack clarifies this with three points: "The first thing to notice is that Barth says our attention should always be focused on the *event* in which the divine 'communication' to the human takes place in Jesus Christ ... The second thing to observe is the nature of the event in which communication takes place. On the side of God, it consists in a 'turning towards' the human Jesus in electing grace. On the side of the human Jesus, it consists in a 'confrontation' with that electing grace of God. The human Jesus *confronts* the electing grace of God as His 'first' and 'last,' as His 'exclusive' and 'complete' determination ... the third thing which needs to be understood is the nature of this 'determination.' The word 'determination' [*Bestimmung*] which Barth frequently uses to describe the act of God which gives rise to 'exaltation' has nothing to do with a determinism which leaves no room for human freedom. Throughout it is presupposed that the One to whom the electing grace of God comes may act freely in response," 356-357. It is only in Jesus Christ that men and women live as covenant partners with God. McCormack explains, "Our 'essence' – our true humanity – stands behind us in the 'there and then' of Jesus of Nazareth as the reality which sets a limit to our being in sin. And it stands before us as the eschatological goal of our lives, a goal which will mean a complete overcoming of the division between our true 'essence' and our lived 'existence'," 359. Therefore, he states that "it is not surprising then that Barth never speaks directly of a participation in God *in this world* with respect to anyone other than Jesus ... He does indeed speak of a *participatio Christi* – a participation in the holiness of the *human* Jesus," 359.

<sup>2</sup> This section will focus on the influence of the event of the cross in the lives of individual men and women. It is important to note that some argue the event of the cross has been a significant



It is essential to see how Barth addresses ethics with the doctrine of reconciliation. Jüngel notes that “the fragments of ethics of the doctrine of reconciliation are especially important within the *Church Dogmatics*, since Barth wants to understand the special ethics of both the doctrine of creation and the (no longer to be realized) doctrine of redemption as grounded in the ethics of the doctrine of reconciliation.”<sup>3</sup> According to Jüngel:

That doctrine [reconciliation] has ‘the material primacy’ over the other two forms of special ethics. For in the same way that in the earlier Christological-soteriological parts of the doctrine of reconciliation theology stood before its dogmatic centre, so here theology stands ‘ethically ... before the centre, the source of all the reality and revelation of God and man – Jesus Christ, who is not only the ontic but also the noetic basis of the whole of Christian truth and the Christian message’.<sup>4</sup>

The event of the cross reconciles God and humanity and, therefore, makes human response and ethics possible. Barth defines Christians as:

people to whom the irrevocable and irreversible thing that decides their whole existence has happened, namely that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ has become a present event for them, not as they are taught about it and persuaded of its significance, not by any sacramental act, that is, baptism or the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, but by the Holy Spirit in the power of His living Word. It is present as that which took place at Golgotha: the decisive moment of his history has become the decisive moment of their own history.<sup>5</sup>

Note that it is the crucifixion that is a present event and decisive act that shapes the human response to the life and grace of God. Barth writes:

The Gospel story in its unity and completeness, Jesus Christ Himself who was the Judge and who allowed Himself to be judged in execution of His judgement, is the being which is the power of the corresponding becoming, the significant thing which can and will acquire significance for many individual men.<sup>6</sup>

Barth states the influence of the atoning death of Jesus Christ for men and women:

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influence in western culture. Gorringer states, “The story of the crucifixion ... plays an indisputably important role in shaping the mentalities and sensibilities of Western culture. As such it has also helped shape Western attitudes to the punishment of offenders,” Gorringer, *God’s Just Vengeance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 58. Gorringer is concerned the event of the cross has historically encouraged retributive punishment in western culture and he calls for the Christian community to articulate forgiveness based on the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Similarly, O’Donovan describes the influence of the cross: “In opposition to every politics of identity and self-complacency God has set the cross of Jesus Christ ... It is a *royal* cross, challenging the conditions of earthly political authority with the coming kingdom of God,” *The Ways of Judgement* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2005), 231. According to O’Donovan, the decisive test of a political theology is whether it can articulate this counter-political moment in the New Testament proclamation of the cross, with its moral implication: ‘Judge not, that you be not judged!’ (Matthew 7:1), *Ways of Judgement*, 233. O’Donovan argues that the Christian community must become those who do not judge one another because reconciliation occurs in the judgement of Jesus Christ on the cross.

<sup>3</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, “Anrufung Gottes Als Grundethos Christlichen Handelns,” *Barth Studien* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1982), 316. Translated by John Webster in Eberhard Jüngel, *Theological Essays I* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 155.

<sup>4</sup> Jüngel, *Barth Studien*, 316, quoting Barth, *Das christliche Leben*, 12-13, (*The Christian Life*, 9).

<sup>5</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 145. Translated by John Webster, *Theological Essays I*, 155.

<sup>6</sup> IV/1, 227.

The one reality of the atonement has both an objective and a subjective side in so far as – we cannot separate but we must not confuse the two – it is both a divine act and offer and also an active human participation in it: the unique history of Jesus Christ; but enclosed and exemplified in this the history of many other men of many other ages.<sup>7</sup>

The death of Jesus Christ judges human sin and declares humanity to be righteous which allows for human participation in and fellowship with God. Barth states that acting “for us” and “in our place” so that:

What He has done He has done in order that being done by Him it may be done by us; not only acceptable to God, but already accepted ... He alone has done this, but because He has done it, in a decision that cannot be reversed, with a truth which is absolute, He has done it for us.<sup>8</sup>

The atoning death of Jesus Christ is effective in the lives of men and women today because of the event of the resurrection. Barth connects the cry from the cross to God’s verdict revealed in the resurrection.

What comes to Jesus Christ in His resurrection, what He receives in it, as the Representative of all men and therefore on their, on our behalf, is that the fatherly right of the divine demand fulfilled in Him is made manifest, visible, audible and perceptible in Him, just as He has made it manifest, visible, audible and perceptible as the divine demand in the act of obedience of His death (in execution of His right as the Son), even to the point of His cry and question: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’<sup>9</sup>

Analysing this further, Barth explains that:

‘Jesus Christ for us,’ the incarnation and the crucifixion, do not exist or take place in an abstract always and everywhere in which our here and now are included, but in a concrete and singular then and there which cannot be taken away or exchanged – outside our here and now and opposed to it.<sup>10</sup>

In the act of reconciliation “on the one hand it is God for man, on the other man against God.”<sup>11</sup> If men and women acknowledge God’s reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross then they are confronted with the knowledge that they are crucified and dead in him.

That Jesus Christ died for us does not mean, therefore that we do not have to die, but that we have died in and with Him, that as the people we were we have been done away and destroyed, that we are no longer there and have no more future.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, men and women resist acknowledging the severity of the event of the cross and its influence over their lives. Barth explains that:

It is obvious that we do not want this, that we do not want to accept the fact that our evil case is done away and ourselves with it, that we do not therefore want to accept the coming of the Son of God in our place, His being and activity in contemporaneity with us, and our being in contemporaneity with Him. The assault this makes on us is too violent and incisive.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> IV/1, 643.

<sup>8</sup> IV/1, 283.

<sup>9</sup> IV/1, 566.

<sup>10</sup> IV/1, 288.

<sup>11</sup> IV/1, 290.

<sup>12</sup> IV/1, 294-295.

<sup>13</sup> IV/1, 291.

Whether decisive or not, the event of the cross judges the sins of humanity and makes human fellowship with God possible. The resurrection reveals to humanity that Jesus Christ's "being as the One who suffered and died, became and is as such His eternal being and therefore His present-day being every day of our time."<sup>14</sup> Therefore what took place then and there took place once and for all. Easter Day reveals that what "took place on the third day after His death lifted up the whole of what took place before in all its particularity (not in spite of but because of its particularity) into something that took place once and for all."<sup>15</sup>

Critics argue that Barth's emphasis on Jesus Christ's death being "for all" limits the individual. Biggar is concerned about the deterministic tendency he interprets in Barth's doctrine of God. Biggar argues that Barth:

makes it perfectly clear that what the gracious God seeks is the free, glad, spontaneous, voluntary co-operation of his creatures. But in arguing that this freedom of God is something all creatures must ultimately enjoy, Barth seems to propose a form of 'compatibilist' account; namely, that humans are *determined* to choose *freely* what is right.<sup>16</sup>

Biggar's fear concerning a "compatibilist" definition of freedom is corrected by understanding how Barth defines freedom and relates human freedom to reconciliation with God. McDowell states that Barth "emphatically rejects suspicions of divine coercion."<sup>17</sup> Barth places human agency within the context of God's election of humanity in Jesus Christ which illustrates the content of human freedom. McDowell explains that "In election ... humanity receives a specific determination: to be a spontaneously responsive agent before God, 'confirming and glorifying' God's sovereignty."<sup>18</sup> Humanity may respond to the grace of God in fellowship because of the reconciliation accomplished through the death of Jesus Christ and the continuing mediation of Christ.

Another critic argues that Barth's doctrine of election limits the possibility of human agency. Charles Waldrop states, "Since the human nature which the Son assumed is the human nature of all men ... it is difficult to see how the many

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<sup>14</sup> IV/1, 313.

<sup>15</sup> IV/1, 313.

<sup>16</sup> Biggar, *Hastening that Waits*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> McDowell, "Learning Where to Place One's Hope," 331.

<sup>18</sup> McDowell, "Learning Where to Place One's Hope," 331-332, quoting II/2, 178. Jüngel explains that "The human person is claimed by the love of God and by that alone: this is the fundamental insight of Christian ethics, which equally makes human action thematic from the point of view of the free decision and material determination," *Barth Studien*, 318.

persons who are assumed in and with the assumption of the human nature of Jesus can have an independent existence.”<sup>19</sup> However, according to Barth:

In Jesus Christ the alteration of the human situation did take place, and does take place today ... What remains for them [humans] is high and appropriate and joyful and stringent enough – to welcome the divine verdict, to take it seriously with full responsibility, not to keep their knowledge of it to themselves, but by the witness of their existence and proclamation to make known to the world which is still blind and deaf to this verdict ... They do not have to assist or add to the being and work of their living Saviour who is the Lord of the world, let alone replace it with their own work.<sup>20</sup>

Barth is careful to note that individuals have an independent existence. He argues concerning the fellowship between God and humanity that it:

must not be overlooked or denied, that in it, Christ does not merge into the Christian nor the Christian into Christ. There is no disappearance nor destruction of the one in favour of the other ... In their fellowship both become and are genuinely what they are, not confounding or exchanging their functions and roles nor losing their totally dissimilar persons.<sup>21</sup>

Jesus Christ “is absolutely isolated from all others,” yet also mediates between God and humanity:

He does not merely comfort, encourage, admonish or protect them remotely or from afar. But as He calls them to Himself in the divine power of the Holy Spirit, He refreshes them by offering and giving Himself to them and making them His own.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus Christ died on the cross and was raised from the dead in order that humanity could participate in fellowship with the triune God. According to Barth, the cross of Golgotha must not be forgotten as men and women live as reconciled people of God:

Jesus lives – as the Lord, not as an indolent, easy-going Lord who invites us to be easy-going, but as a stern Lord. But He is stern in that He prevents us from going back or looking back, demanding that we should take up our little cross – our cross, not His – and follow Him, but follow Him where He Himself has long since carried His own, by the way of Golgotha to the throne of God, to lay it down there with all the sin and guilt of the whole world, with our death, and to receive in our name as the obedient Son of the Father the grace of everlasting life.<sup>23</sup>

Barth argues that women and men are not called to repeat or re-enact the death of Jesus Christ on the cross but are called to follow Jesus to Golgotha with the

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character* (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), 177.

<sup>20</sup> IV/1, 317.

<sup>21</sup> IV/3, 539.

<sup>22</sup> IV/3, 541. Again Barth argues, “God is *Spirit*, and therefore He truly awakens man to freedom. That He causes His divine power to come on him does not mean that He overtakes and overwhelms and crushes him, forcing him to be what He would have him be ... He treats him, and indeed establishes him, as a free subject. He sets him on his feet as His partner. He wills that he should stand and walk on his own feet. He thus wills that he should believe and love and hope ... Far from the Christian being mastered and taken out of himself when he is awakened to hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is in this life in hope ... that he really comes to himself and may be himself,” IV/3, 941-942.

<sup>23</sup> IV/1, 345.

burdens given to them and accept the grace and forgiveness of God. Barth writes, "We are not oppressed and extinguished in the death of Jesus Christ, but liberated and refashioned. In virtue of the death of Jesus Christ we are allowed to be."<sup>24</sup> Jüngel states that Barth's ethics of reconciliation "is eminently an ethics of freedom, not only because it has freedom as its object but much more because through its self-understanding as an intellectual discipline and its self-limitation it shows itself to be an ethics of freedom."<sup>25</sup> The event of the cross liberates humanity to respond to God's love and calls for a free human response. Webster argues:

Barth's ethics of reconciliation is a two-fold claim: that the followers of Jesus Christ are invited and entitled to act, and that the invitation and entitlement to action are truly grasped only by those who live in his fellowship and under his good and gracious rule.<sup>26</sup>

Jane Barter argues that liberation in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation does not mean an "unchecked self-determining freedom" but the liberation "of the individual Christian witness is one in which she enjoys the confidence and assurance of fellowship with Christ."<sup>27</sup> Barter explains that liberation of the individual is twofold. "In addition to being liberated from a substantial tyranny, the Christian is also liberated *to* a specific mission."<sup>28</sup> She argues:

The universal history of salvation is, according to Barth, also the personal story of the Christian. The universal history of salvation must be existentially lived by the Christian in order for her to be a true witness. The Christian's liberation, then, is not merely a noetic assent to this universal event: one must testify to it in service. Although God is not dependent upon human service, he has willed that human service be joined to his action in the world.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> IV/1, 350.

<sup>25</sup> Jüngel, *Barth Studien*, 317. Translated by John Webster, *Theological Essays I*, 156.

Jüngel explains, "The commanding of the God who is gracious to us in Jesus Christ is the expression of God's commanding which make possible and demands immediate communication [*Verkehr*] between God and ourselves and therefore also ourselves and God ... This ethic has to respect the freedom of both," *Barth Studien*, 317. Translated by John Webster, *Theological Essays I*, 156.

<sup>26</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 19. Webster later carefully defines Barth's understanding of freedom. "For him, moral freedom is consent to the necessary character of the moral order of God: it is 'situated freedom'. Freedom is not primarily to be identified with will or choice considered as ends in themselves, or as quintessential marks of human dignity whose removal spells the end of serious consideration of the substance of humanity. Nor is freedom best envisaged as discontinuity or independence from the order of things," *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 227.

<sup>27</sup> Jane Barter, "A Theology of Liberation in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* IV/3," in *SJT*, 53:2 (2000), 155, 160.

<sup>28</sup> Barter, "A Theology of Liberation," 160.

<sup>29</sup> Barter, "A Theology of Liberation," 161.



God created humankind for fellowship and, through the reconciliation accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ, men and women are liberated and given space to respond to God's grace. Barth writes:

In the existence of the community in the world we have immediately before our eyes the fact that even after the event of the cross revealed in that of Easter, God still allowed and had time and space for human existence and history and problems. Man can and must come into view ... not as perfect man as He will be presented in and with the final revelation of Jesus Christ, to live as such eternally with God, having passed through judgement, and not as perverted and sinful and lost man, but as man who in his perversion, sin and lostness has been visited by the reconciliation of the world with God accomplished in Jesus Christ, and altered at the very root of his being.<sup>30</sup>

Barth posits that the events of the cross and resurrection have a negative and positive aspect. He explains how this dialectic of the negative and positive aspects of justification is a reality in the lives of men and women:

The dialectic of justification is not that of a to and fro, or an up and down, but at every present it is that of a history in which the wrong of the justified man is (in all its reality) behind him and his right before him, in which, therefore, he can have his future only in the movement to his right and his past only in his wrong (in all its reality), in which he can be only on the way from there to here, because that and that alone corresponds to the positive will of God.<sup>31</sup>

In the negative and positive aspects of the reconciling work of God, Barth insists that "In justifying us, God in the first instance shows Himself to be righteous."<sup>32</sup> However, this action also provides pardon for humanity. Barth explains that this pardon to humanity must be recognised as "God's sentence on man", which "can be received and taken to heart and put into effect by him only as the sentence of God upon him and therefore as the Word of God's revelation addressed to him", and which "has an authority and force and validity which are not partial but total, not relative but absolute."<sup>33</sup> The condition of every human is now that of "*simul peccator et iustus*, yet not half *peccator* and half *iustus*, but both altogether."<sup>34</sup>

Daniel Migliore explains Barth's use of Luther here:

According to Barth, the conjunction of justification and sanctification is different from a static paradox or an aimless dialectic, as might be suggested by a misuse of Luther's doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator*. Rather, for Barth justification and sanctification are related in a special material order, with justification being the basis and presupposition of sanctification, and sanctification the aim and consequence of justification. While the order is not to be construed as a temporal sequence, it is unmistakably teleological. If justification is the basis of sanctification, sanctification is the goal of justification.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> IV/1, 353.

<sup>31</sup> IV/1, 592.

<sup>32</sup> IV/1, 568.

<sup>33</sup> IV/1, 569-570.

<sup>34</sup> IV/1, 596.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Migliore, "Participatio Christi: The Central Theme of Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification," in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie*, 18:3 (2002), 287.

How should men and women respond to the reconciliation accomplished by God?

Barth states:

In true penitence man makes in simple obedience the turning for which he is pronounced free in the justifying sentence of God, which is therefore both legitimate and possible. He bows to the one total and indivisible disposing of God ... in and with the confession of sin he lays hold of God's promise of grace. God's pardon demands this total obedience.<sup>36</sup>

Barth defines justifying faith as "the faith which recognises and apprehends man's justification, [and] is the obedience of humility."<sup>37</sup> Barth argues that, "because it is faith in Jesus Christ, it can be true and living faith only as the humility of obedience; it has to be an empty hand, an empty vessel, a vacuum. It can be said of the believer at all times and circumstances ... 'By the grace of God I am what I am' (1 Cor. 15:10)."<sup>38</sup>

Human participation with God is possible because of the reconciliation that occurs in the event of the cross and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Barth states, "The Holy Spirit is the awakening power in which Jesus Christ summons a sinful man to His community and therefore as a Christian to believe in Him: to acknowledge and know and confess Him as the Lord who for him became a servant."<sup>39</sup> By the action of the Holy Spirit men and women acknowledge the reconciliation that occurred in Jesus Christ and respond in confession. According to Barth, the free response of confession "is the moment in the act of faith in which the believer stands to his faith, or rather, to the One in whom he believes, the One whom he acknowledges and recognises, the living Jesus Christ."<sup>40</sup> By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit humanity comes to recognise the reconciliation that occurs in Jesus Christ's death and can respond to the grace and love of God in confession.

## **B. Justification and sanctification in unity and distinction**

In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/2 Barth discusses sanctification and stresses the role of the cross in the lives of men and women. According to Barth,

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<sup>36</sup> IV/1, 594.

<sup>37</sup> IV/1, 626.

<sup>38</sup> IV/1, 631.

<sup>39</sup> IV/1, 740. Biggar notes that God is revealed to humanity as a triune God who creates, reconciles and redeems, and God's command is addressed to men and women who live as God's creatures and are pardoned sinners and heirs of eternal life. He argues, "In accordance ... with the form of the ethical event whose characteristics it seeks to describe, special ethics differentiates itself into three parts: the command of God the Creator, the command of God the Reconciler, and the command of God the Redeemer," *Hastening that Waits*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> IV/1, 777.

the terms justification and sanctification describe the benefits humanity receives as a result of the reconciliation that occurs in Jesus Christ. Barth relates the acts of justification and sanctification to Old Testament theology. He argues, "The divine act of atonement accomplished and revealed in Jesus Christ does not consist only in the humiliation of God but in and with this in the exaltation of man ... 'I will be your God' is the justification of man. 'Ye shall be my people' is his sanctification."<sup>41</sup> Barth writes that justification and sanctification are "two different aspects of the one event of salvation" and must be thought of as distinguished acts, but "cannot be divided or separated."<sup>42</sup> Hunsinger argues that Barth attempts to combine soteriological features from both Luther and Calvin: "What Barth attempts to combine... is the simultaneity of justification and sanctification [from Calvin], on the one hand, along with *simul iustus et peccator* [from Luther], on the other."<sup>43</sup> According to Hunsinger, "Barth agrees with Luther ... that *simul iustus et peccator* is ... not just one theological truth among others. Rather it constitutes the framework of sense and nonsense for soteriology as a whole."<sup>44</sup> According to Barth, men and women are sanctified in Jesus Christ. Sanctification of men and women occurs when men and women are "called by Him to fellowship with Himself, placed in it, united with Him by His Holy Spirit, they are free here and now in correspondence to His kingly rule at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. To their salvation they are free only for this. But they are genuinely free for this."<sup>45</sup> Hunsinger argues:

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<sup>41</sup> IV/2, 499. It is important to recognise here how Barth incorporates Christology with soteriology with the threefold office of Jesus Christ. For Barth, the priestly work of Jesus Christ (the Son of God who becomes a servant) is the basis for humanity's justification, his kingly work (the royal Son of Man exalted) is the basis of our sanctification, and his prophetic work, (Jesus Christ as the true Witness) is the basis of our vocation. These offices are distinct yet united, as the salvific work accomplished by Jesus Christ as priest, king and prophet justifies, sanctifies and calls humanity.

<sup>42</sup> IV/2, 505. Migliore argues, "Barth's case for the distinct but inseparable relationship of justification and sanctification is based on his interpretation of Chalcedonian Christology," Migliore, "Participatio Christi," 287.

<sup>43</sup> George Hunsinger, "A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification and Sanctification in Calvin and Barth," in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 76.

<sup>44</sup> Hunsinger, "A Tale of Two Simultaneities," 76.

<sup>45</sup> IV/2, 533. According to Moltmann, sanctification "means first of all rediscovering *the sanctity of life and the divine mystery of creation*, and defending them from life's manipulation, the secularization of nature, and the destruction of the world through human violence," *The Spirit of Life*, 171. Moltmann argues that sanctification has both a theological definition (the divine act through which God chooses something for himself and makes it his own, thus letting it participate in his nature) and an anthropological definition (whatever God declares to be holy ought to be kept holy by human beings), 171-175. Moltmann argues, "In the response of their lives to the life-giving word of God, believers are not merely the passive objects of divine sanctification. They are also the new determining subjects of the Gestalt or configuration of their

The simultaneity of justification and sanctification, Barth thinks, takes place at the level of our objective participation in Christ before it ever takes place at the level of our active participation. He thereby forcibly shifts the whole axis of salvation (justification and sanctification) away from what takes place in us existentially (*in nobis*) to what has taken place apart from us preveniently in Christ (*extra nos*).<sup>46</sup>

Through the reconciliation that occurs in the event of the cross and its universal influence upon humanity, men and women are justified (through the humiliation of Jesus Christ) and are sanctified (through the exaltation of Jesus Christ). Barth explains, "Our sanctification consists in our participation in His sanctification as grounded in the efficacy and revelation of the grace of Jesus Christ."<sup>47</sup> Although Barth states that men and women participate in Christ's sanctification, he is careful to note that Jesus Christ's suffering and death on the cross is different than the suffering other men and women experience:

No man but Jesus has ever known the true breadth and depth, the true essence and darkness, of human misery. What we see and note and know and more or less painfully experience of it is only the shadow of His cross touching us. In all its essence and darkness it is, of course, our misery. It is we who make that headlong plunge. But we can see this only before the passion of Christ as we hear His cry: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' We cannot see it in the terror and doubt and despair which may come on us. Or we can see it in these only as a distant recollection of the misery of which He has made an end in His death; only as an echo of His cry; only as a sign that we are truly in Him, and therefore share His sufferings ... However severely we may be buffeted, there can be no question of repetitions of Golgotha. Not merely quantitatively, but qualitatively, all the content of our experience is completely transcended by Golgotha.<sup>48</sup>

Hunsinger explains, "In our conversion God frees us from sin's dominion once and for all, and then continually again and again."<sup>49</sup> McCormack states:

Without ceasing to live 'below' and, therefore, 'in the flesh,' we are enabled to look away from ourselves, to lift up our heads to the One who is exalted above. Our

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own lives ... Sanctification is *the discipleship of Jesus* and means coming to life in God's Spirit," 175. Moltmann fails to discuss how the "coming to life in God's Spirit" occurs or how men and women can live as agents with the Spirit. Barth maintains that justification and sanctification are connected as two aspects of the event of reconciliation, however, Moltmann views them as separate.

<sup>46</sup> Hunsinger, "A Tale of Two Simultaneities," 78. Hunsinger argues that "This shift is one of the most striking and momentous moves in his soteriology," 78. Hunsinger explains the role of the Spirit in soteriology: "The Spirit does not signify, as in so many Spirit-orientated Christologies, that salvation consists exclusively or chiefly in effecting something *in nobis*, whether religious experiences, renewed dispositions, or a new mode of being in the world. On the contrary, the presence and power of the Spirit are understood to attest what the incarnate Word of God has done for our salvation apart from us (*extra nos*), and to mediate our participation in it by faith (*participatio Christi*) ... Because the person of Jesus Christ has not only enacted but is and remains our salvation, he is and remains the enduring focus of the Spirit's work," in "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 181.

<sup>47</sup> IV/2, 517.

<sup>48</sup> IV/2, 487.

<sup>49</sup> Hunsinger, "A Tale of Two Simultaneities," 85.

positive sanctification consists in this act of looking to Him, of bearing witness to *His* sanctity – a sanctity which we never possess in ourselves but is always ‘alien’ to us.<sup>50</sup>

The Christian life of obedient response is made possible by the reconciliation that occurs once and for all in the event of the cross and by the continual renewal of faith given to the believer by God moment by moment. Migliore posits:

Christian life has a purpose and goal not only beyond one’s reception of forgiveness but also beyond the transformation of one’s personal life ... For Barth, justification and sanctification prepare Christians for vocation, for bearing witness to the priestly, royal, and prophetic work of Jesus Christ and for serving him in his mission of reconciliation.<sup>51</sup>

Individual men and women (by the grace of God) are awakened to faith and are summoned to respond in obedience. Webster notes that “contrary to what is sometimes alleged, Barth’s anthropology gives considerable weight to the human person as intrinsically an agent.”<sup>52</sup> Men and women are created by God for fellowship, however, as created beings, they exist in limitation. Webster argues that according to Barth this limitation “is not about deficiency, still less about some divine force inhibiting legitimate human flourishing; it is rather the creature’s quite specific path to glory assigned and maintained by the ordering acts of God.”<sup>53</sup>

#### *a. the dignity of the cross*

In the last section of the paragraph concerning the sanctification of humanity, Barth discusses “the dignity of the cross.” Barth argues that the cross is an “indispensable element in any Christian doctrine of sanctification.”<sup>54</sup> According to Barth, the cross is important to the sanctification of humanity for two reasons. First, Barth states that the cross “marks the limit of sanctification as the raising up of slothful man in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>55</sup> Barth explains this limit:

To His exaltation there corresponds that of His elect and called, the elevation which now comes to Christians and is promised to all men ... Yet their elevation is not

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<sup>50</sup> McCormack, “Participation in God, Yes,” 360, referring to IV/2, 527 and IV/2, 518.

<sup>51</sup> Migliore, “Participatio Christi,” 288. Migliore argues: “Barth’s doctrine of sanctification cannot be abstracted from the comprehensive theological ontology in which it is embedded. It presupposes a realistic understanding of the eternal election of God to be God for humanity; it presupposes a realistic trinitarian understanding of God as the God who lives in eternal self-giving love, who freely enters into fellowship with humanity in Jesus Christ, and who freely gathers, builds up, and commissions a new community of men and women in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit; it presupposes a realistic understanding of the union of the eternal Word of God and human nature in Jesus Christ in which all humanity is included,” 290.

<sup>52</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 70.

<sup>53</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 72.

<sup>54</sup> IV/2, 598.

<sup>55</sup> IV/2, 598.



identical with His exaltation ... The relationship between the two is irreversible. And if their elevation consists ultimately in the fact that they have to take up and carry their cross, this is not a re-enactment of His crucifixion. It takes place in correspondence to it; with the similarity proper to a disciple following his Master; but not in any sense in likeness, let alone identity.<sup>56</sup>

Second, Barth states that the cross should be discussed at the end of the discussion concerning sanctification:

because under all the aspects so far concerned – as *participatio Christi*, the call to discipleship, awakening to conversion and the praise of works – it is with reference to the cross that man's sanctification is seen to be his movement to that goal, and therefore set in the light of the great Christian hope.<sup>57</sup>

The event of the cross serves thus as the appropriate reference for understanding the human life in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Barth explains, "It is on the basis of His exaltation in His death on the cross as the One who was rejected in our place that there takes place their elevation with its limit and goal in the fact that they too come to bear and suffer their cross."<sup>58</sup> Barth argues that participation in fellowship with God means participation in the cross of Jesus Christ.

The special fellowship of the Christian with Christ involves participation in the passion of His cross ... What they suffer is not what Jesus suffered – the judgement of God on the man of unrighteousness, the divine rejection without which the election of man cannot be accomplished ... In their cross they have only a small and subsequent taste of what the world and they themselves deserved at the hand of God, and Jesus endured in all its frightfulness as Head and in their place.<sup>59</sup>

Barth compares the suffering of Jesus Christ with the suffering of other men and women. Barth states that although "they too have to suffer rejection at the hands of men ... they do not have to suffer rejection by God."<sup>60</sup> However, Barth is careful to explain how the Christian affliction and suffering must be understood in light of both the cross and the resurrection. Elsewhere Barth argues:

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<sup>56</sup> IV/2, 600.

<sup>57</sup> IV/2, 598. Biggar states, "In his exposition [in *The Christian Life*] of what he means by 'correspondence' Barth makes almost no reference at all to the Passion of Christ," *Hastening that Waits*, 108. Biggar argues, "Barth avoids giving his concept of correspondence this focus [of the cross]: because he deems it inappropriate to characterize the life of God Incarnate by any one of its moments. Accordingly, he denies that the way of correspondence to God Incarnate can be identified with the way of the cross," 108. Contrary to Biggar's comments, Barth is clear in this section of the *Church Dogmatics* that he understands the cross serves as a reference in the life of the Christian.

<sup>58</sup> IV/2, 599. Barth acknowledges that as Christians, men and women stand under the shadow of the cross: "The suffering of his [of the Christian] is the suffering in reflection of and in analogy to the suffering of the one man of Gethsemane and Golgotha. It is suffering under the shadow of his cross," IV/3, 637. This means that the Christian will experience affliction and "additional, specific pressure to which he is exposed because he is a Christian ... It is just because he is a witness of Jesus Christ, and to that extent that he is active as such, that affliction comes upon him from without, from the world in the face of which he stands," IV/3, 615.

<sup>59</sup> IV/2, 604. Because of this Barth states that "the man called to be a witness, and therefore the Christian, is always the Christian in affliction," IV/3, 640.

<sup>60</sup> IV/2, 604.

To be united with the Crucified is to participate in the existence of the One who as such, in His death and passion, not only humbled Himself to be a Servant but was also exalted to be Lord, and who in His death and passion strode forward to the Easter revelation and to His indestructible life as the One who was humbled and exalted in this way ... They do not suffer absolutely, but in this expectation, in movement to this future, on the way to the revelation of their life with His, in participation in His life.<sup>61</sup>

The cross of Golgotha summons men and women to follow Jesus Christ. Barth writes that “as the cross of the Christian comes from Jesus it is in all its forms an awakening call and summons to look to Him, and therefore ... to arise.”<sup>62</sup> Barth warns that it is “only in this context that we can say anything more concrete if we are not to be guilty of dubious moralising.”<sup>63</sup>

Barth then mentions that human suffering and the trials that men and women experience have purpose. According to Barth, individual suffering is necessary for humility. Barth states, “it is necessary and good for the Christian, and serviceable to sanctification, to be kept in the humility which is not natural to any of us, or rather to be continually recalled to it, by the cross which he has to bear.”<sup>64</sup> Likewise, “it is also helpful to sanctification that he should accept the punishment which in some real if hidden sense comes in and with his cross.”<sup>65</sup> Understanding the suffering that men and women bear in life as punishment for Barth, “may and will remind [them] of the great punishment which [they are] spared.”<sup>66</sup> When the burdens of life are carried by men and women, Barth states that “the cross which is really taken and carried by the Christian is a powerful force to discipline and strengthen his faith and obedience and love.”<sup>67</sup> Barth explains how the sufferings and trials of life assist sanctification:

When the cross comes, man’s own spirit is rightly directed by the Holy Spirit as it previously refused to be – although pretending to be full of the Spirit. The Christian is taken in hand. And this is obviously to the benefit of his sanctification, his faith and obedience and love. From this crisis – which will have to come more than once and in different forms – he will obviously emerge stronger than when he was engulfed by it.<sup>68</sup>

Barth states with “particular care and restraint” that trials of human life may be beneficial for the faith of men and women.<sup>69</sup> He argues, “the cross is for the Christian the opportunity – and if he takes and bears it the power as well as the

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<sup>61</sup> IV/3, 642.

<sup>62</sup> IV/2, 607.

<sup>63</sup> IV/2, 607.

<sup>64</sup> IV/2, 607. Barth explains that, “Even if it consists only in an ordinary toothache, it will remind him of the limited nature of even his Christian existence, of his frailty and pettiness. It will restrain him from taking himself and his spirituality and his faith and its practical achievements with a seriousness which has no place for criticism and humour,” IV/2, 607.

<sup>65</sup> IV/2, 608.

<sup>66</sup> IV/2, 608.

<sup>67</sup> IV/2, 608.

<sup>68</sup> IV/2, 608.

<sup>69</sup> IV/2, 609.

opportunity – to verify and therefore to purify and deepen his Christian existence and intensify his Christian work.”<sup>70</sup> The trials Christians experience may promote gratitude, humility, discipline, and spiritual reflection.

At the end of the section concerning the dignity of the cross Barth mentions specific instances of men and women carrying their individual crosses. Barth explains that “In the New Testament the cross means primarily persecution.”<sup>71</sup> For the present time, Barth says that there are several New Testament examples of crosses that men and women bear. Barth explains:

A passage like Romans 8:19f. is shot through by the conception that the cross of Christians also consists in their particular share in the tension, transience, suffering and obscurity by which every man is in some form constricted and disturbed and finally condemned to death, and in which man also seems to find himself in a painful connexion with creation as such and as a whole.<sup>72</sup>

Of the many sufferings that men and women may experience, Barth states that doubt is especially significant. According to Barth, doubt “is the bitterest form of the cross” and he states that doubt “has been laid, with its hostile stimulation, even on what are humanly speaking the greatest of Christians.”<sup>73</sup> Barth turns to Jesus Christ on the cross to provide meaning for the doubt of men and women:

According to Mark 15:34 Jesus Himself experienced the cross finally and supremely in this form. He, the only begotten Son of God, had to ask: ‘Why hast thou forsaken me?’ This is comforting. What are our doubts and despairs, disguised or acute, compared with His dereliction, which was also and especially suffered by Him in our place?<sup>74</sup>

The section concerning the sanctification of humanity ends with two observations about the cross and sufferings of men and women. First, Barth states that “we must emphasize again that those who know what the cross is will not desire or seek to bear it.”<sup>75</sup> It is wrong to seek out suffering for any reason. “Self-sought suffering has nothing whatever to do with participation in the passion of Jesus Christ, and therefore with man’s sanctification.”<sup>76</sup> Second, any suffering men and

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<sup>70</sup> IV/2, 609.

<sup>71</sup> IV/2, 609.

<sup>72</sup> IV/2, 611. Barth lists other specific sufferings that are possible positive opportunities: “in relation to the cross laid on the Christian [persecution] we have also to think of the afflictions of creaturely life and being which come on him either suddenly or gradually, momentarily or continually, but in the long run with overwhelming force: misfortunes, accidents, sickness and age; parting from those most dearly loved; disruption and even hostility in respect of the most important human relations and communications; anxiety or unintentional humiliations and slights which have to be accepted from those immediately around; the inability freely to develop one’s particular tasks; participation in the general adversities of the age which none can escape; and finally the dying which awaits us all at the end,” IV/2, 611.

<sup>73</sup> IV/2, 612.

<sup>74</sup> IV/2, 612. Jane Barter notes that “Liberation, in Barth’s terms, is not release from the bondage of affliction. Affliction is a necessary ingredient of the Christian life,” in “A Theology of Liberation,” 159.

<sup>75</sup> IV/2, 613.

<sup>76</sup> IV/1, 613.

women face must be put into perspective by the hope of eternal life. "It is not our cross which is eternal, but, when we have borne it, the future life revealed by the crucifixion of Jesus."<sup>77</sup> Because of the hope of eternal life, Barth states that "there cannot lack a foretaste of joy even in the intermediate time of waiting, in the time of sanctification, and therefore in the time of the cross."<sup>78</sup> Earlier in *Church Dogmatics* volume II/1 Barth states a similar view of hope for the future in the midst of present sufferings and compares our trials to Jesus Christ's death on the cross. He writes:

The sufferings of this present time, which reflect both the light and shadow of this moment, are nothing in comparison with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:17f). If we suffer with Him in this hope, and we believe according to God's Word that we have to suffer with Jesus Christ in this hope, we can and may and must suffer in patience: answering His patience with our patience; giving the right answer to the waiting of His wrath with our waiting for redemption.<sup>79</sup>

Barth argues that reflecting upon the reconciliation occurs in the event of the cross reveals the love and grace of God provides hope for future eternal life.

#### *b. the cross and vocation*

In the third part of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV of Barth described the vocation of the Christian as a life of witness in service to Jesus Christ. Barth states that:

The Word of the living Jesus Christ is the creative call by which He awakens man to an active knowledge of the truth and thus receives him into the new standing of the Christian, namely, into a particular fellowship with Himself, thrusting him as His afflicted but well-equipped witness into the service of His prophetic work.<sup>80</sup>

Hunsinger writes, "Witness is thus the true context of fellowship with Christ in this life."<sup>81</sup> This witness means a witness to the cross of Jesus Christ. He argues:

The special vocation of the Christian is to share in the living self-witness of the Crucified. This sharing results in a fellowship of action and a fellowship of suffering. The act of witness will lead to suffering, and the suffering will function as an act of witness to the cross (IV/3, 598, 608, 637-42).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> IV/2, 613.

<sup>78</sup> IV/2, 613.

<sup>79</sup> II/1, 422.

<sup>80</sup> IV/3, 481. The event of the cross shapes the lives of individuals and the Christian community. Barth states, "the obedience of the Christian begins at the cross of Christ where it is decided what man is to be as he belongs not to himself or to an alien power but to God, and what the world is to be as it is not lost to him but loved by Him even in its lost condition," III/3, 256. Elsewhere Barth explains the event of the cross for the church community: "it [the church] became His body, they became its members, in the fulfilment of their eternal election in His death on the cross of Golgotha, proclaimed in His resurrection from the dead," IV/1, 667.

<sup>81</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 183.

<sup>82</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 183. Hunsinger argues that, for Barth, "The 'true being of the Christian' – and therefore of the existential moment of salvation – is found essentially in the vocation of witness, that is, in bearing witness in the world to God's love for the world as shown

The event of Jesus Christ's death upon the cross is central for understanding both justification and sanctification. Hunsinger emphasizes that "[T]he centrality of the cross – as noetically apprehended, experientially reflected, and vocationally proclaimed – is what explains the penultimate relativization of the more positive experiential and beneficial aspects of salvation in Barth's soteriology (cf. IV/3, 408-21)."<sup>83</sup> The Christian is called to witness to the event of the cross and the salvific benefits that humanity receives as a result of the reconciliation that occurs in Jesus Christ's death.

Although the event of the cross elicits a response, it is the ascended Jesus Christ that mediates between God and humanity today. Katherine Sonderegger states, "Following Calvin's lead, Barth holds that Christ's exalted humanity is ascended, at the Father's right hand, and, in the Spirit's elevating power, we seek Him there."<sup>84</sup> The ascended Jesus Christ mediates the Word of God and through the Spirit makes obedient human response possible. Men and women are not called to repeat the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, but are called to respond in gratitude. Sonderegger explains that:

It is Christ's humanity that is sanctified, obedient, exalted, in humiliation, and in correspondence to the lowly Son; our little gestures, our tiny sacrifices, our wretched stabs at corresponding obedience can never be seen as his ... Our sanctification is not repetition, or appropriation or disposition toward holiness, but rather only a following, an acknowledgement, a correspondence by sinners, standing under the Word in alien sanctification.<sup>85</sup>

In *Church Dogmatics* volume III/2 Barth argues that "real man lives with God as His covenant-partner. For God has created him to participate in the history in

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forth in the event of the cross (IV/3, 599)," *How to Read Karl Barth*, 183. This solidarity with others and concern for the neighbour that is found in Barth's theology is missing in Nancy Victorin-Vangerud's critique of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation. She states that "we can join with Barth in affirming that no one is innocent. Yet, we cannot stay with Barth in confining the theological significance of the violated, the oppressed and the marginalised to providing a reflection of the abyss between their violators and God," in "Some Questions of Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation," in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, eds. Geoff Thompson & Christiaan Mostert (Hindmarsh, Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2000), 183. With Hunsinger's understanding that Barth's doctrine of reconciliation provides the liberating freedom which allows men and women to share in the self-witness of the Crucified that includes a "fellowship of action" and "fellowship of suffering," Victorin-Vangerud's concern that Barth's understanding provides solely for the reflection of the abyss found in the brokenness of humanity is unfounded.

<sup>83</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 183.

<sup>84</sup> Katherine Sonderegger, "Sanctification as Impartation in the Doctrine of Karl Barth," in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie*, 18:3 (2002), 313. Sonderegger argues that "Barth understands this elevation to the seated to the seated Christ to entail that we properly, actually and really live in hiddenness in the exalted Christ ... As the Divine Son imparts Personality enhypostatically to the human essence ... so Christ imparts in His Spirit reality and sanctity to the people whom He is the Head," 313.

<sup>85</sup> Sonderegger, "Sanctification as Impartation," 314.



which God is at work with him and he with God; to be His partner in this common history of the covenant.”<sup>86</sup> The cross makes Christian vocation possible. God “is in Himself the One who loves eternally, the One who is eternally loved, and eternal love; and in this triunity He is the original and source of every I and Thou.”<sup>87</sup> Webster explains:

The most important implication – and one which immediately distances Barth from the mainstream of contemporary theological reflection – is that Christian existence is not the point at which the gospel of reconciliation first becomes ‘real’. The ‘reality’ of the gospel of reconciliation is not something of which it comes to be possessed by virtue of our existence and acts; our existence and acts come to possess ‘reality’ in so far as they share in the axiomatic reality of God with us, set forth in the gospel.<sup>88</sup>

According to Barth, “it is this relationship in the inner divine being which is repeated and reflected in God’s eternal covenant with man as revealed and operative in time in the humanity of Jesus” that allows human fellowship with God.<sup>89</sup> “It is in the humanity, the saving work of Jesus Christ that the connexion between God and man is brought before us. It is in this alone that it takes place and is realised.”<sup>90</sup> Barth explains in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV that:

Whatever it may or may not mean for us subjectively; whatever may be its reflection in our consciousness, the fact that reconciliation is also revelation and Jesus Christ lives and works as Prophet means that objectively we can no longer be remote from Him in a private sphere, but that we are drawn into His sphere, into what takes place in Him.<sup>91</sup>

Mangina argues that “For ethics to be done Christianly, the theologian must think first of all in terms of what God has done, and only then proceed to consider what that implies about human beings and their moral choices.”<sup>92</sup> He states that Barth’s theological reflection concerning ethics follows a pattern of God’s action and human response. Mangina notes that for Barth, “God’s action always precedes that of human beings; but because grace creates new realities, it also empowers human beings to be responsible agents.”<sup>93</sup> God’s action in the reconciling death of

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<sup>86</sup> III/2, 203.

<sup>87</sup> III/2, 218.

<sup>88</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 90.

<sup>89</sup> III/2, 218-219. By 1929 Barth had already incorporated this trinitarian aspect into his thinking about ethics. On October 9, 1929 Barth delivered a lecture titled “The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life” to pastors and students which he divided into three sections called The Holy Spirit as Creator, The Holy Spirit as Reconciler, and The Holy Spirit as Redeemer. In these lectures Barth writes, “The significance of the Holy Spirit for the Christian life lies, in the light of the contrast between grace and sin, with especial pregnancy in the fact that he is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, of God’s Son in the flesh who was crucified for us, or (what amounts to the same), the Spirit of the Word of the Father, spoken to us,” *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*, tr. R. Birch Hoyle (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 25.

<sup>90</sup> III/2, 219-220.

<sup>91</sup> IV/3, 182.

<sup>92</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 145.

<sup>93</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 144.

Jesus Christ forms the basis for human ethical action. For Barth, the command of God that summons obedient human response is valid because God “is the God who has summoned man by Himself becoming man and as such not only demanding obedience but rendering it.”<sup>94</sup> Barth argues:

What are we to do? We are to do what corresponds to this grace [of God in Christ]. We are to respond to the existence of Jesus Christ and His people. With our action we are to render an account to this grace. By it and it alone we are challenged. To it and it alone we are responsible.<sup>95</sup>

Barth states that by God’s grace humanity is reconciled to God and is summoned to respond to the grace of God by obeying the divine command.

### C. The divine command

Barth writes that men and women are confronted by the divine command and are called to respond to the grace of God. According to Barth, the divine command “does not confront us as an ideal, whether that of an obligation, that of a permission, or that of a combination of the two, but as the reality fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.”<sup>96</sup> Mangina explains Barth’s understanding of the divine command:

If the general conception of ethics coincides with sin, then Christian ethics coincides with the believer’s relation to Jesus Christ; Christ is the content of God’s command, and knowing what to do in a given situation is a matter of hearing what God, in Christ, has to say.<sup>97</sup>

The divine command and divine revelation is made possible through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and his role as Mediator. Barth writes of Jesus Christ:

in Him, we have a true and overmastering *principium* ... in this *principium* there can be peace between God and us by the death of Adam on the cross of Golgotha – ‘we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world’ – grace, or this person, instructs us to do this, not only by taking from us what is ours, all the falsehood in which Adam tried to be free and succeeded only in becoming a captive, but by giving us what belongs to God, everything, as He is for us and represents us, everything, as we belong to Him and He treats us as His own.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> II/2, 565.

<sup>95</sup> II/2, 576.

<sup>96</sup> II/2, 606. Willis correctly notes that for Barth, “The accent in the notion of command thus falls consistently on the way in which God in Jesus Christ is present to man as the *living* and *acting* God whose impingement on the human is immediate, continuous, and explicit. The command brings us face to face with the person of God himself,” *The Ethics of Karl Barth*, 184.

<sup>97</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 147. Webster states that “Barth’s notion of divine command is rich and supple, and cannot easily be dismissed as simply an aggressive external agency,” in “The Christian in Revolt: Some Reflections on *The Christian Life*,” in *Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Karl Barth’s Birth*, ed. Nigel Biggar (London: Mowbray, 1988), 122.

<sup>98</sup> II/2, 607, quoting Titus 2:12.

In *The Christian Life* Barth explains “the command of God the reconciler” by exploring the following four topics: the character of the commanding God; the character of the human creature; the situation in which God and humanity encounter each other; and the nature of the command and the appropriate response of obedience. According to Barth it is the God who is gracious to humanity in Jesus Christ who commands obedience of the people freed by Christ:

Authentic (as distinct from all fictional) and assured (as distinct from all hypothetical) human understanding is that in which man knows, sees, and understands who and what he is on the basis of Jesus Christ, together with him, and in orientation to him. For in Christ he is constituted as man by God, claimed by God, decision is made by God concerning him, and he is judged by God.<sup>99</sup>

Because of the reconciliation that occurred in Jesus Christ, through the event of the cross, God and humanity “are two subjects in genuine encounter.”<sup>100</sup> However, according to Barth:

Even in their unity in Jesus Christ himself, God does not cease to be God nor man to be man. Their distinction even in their unity in Jesus Christ typifies the qualitative and definitive distinction between God and every other man.<sup>101</sup>

According to Barth, in the covenant of grace God and humanity “are distinct partners, but precisely in their distinction they are partners who are inseparably bound to one another.”<sup>102</sup> Webster notes two important implications for Barth’s understanding of the unity-in-distinction in the encounter between God and humanity:

First, the grounding of humanity in Jesus Christ’s fulfilment of the covenant disallows the absolute autonomy of human acts, since those acts have their substance in so far as they mysteriously co-inhere in God’s own act in Jesus Christ (this is the ‘unity’ motif). Second, the unity of God and human agency is a differentiated unity (the ‘distinction’ motif) which disallows the complete absorption of the human agent into God. God and humanity are, therefore, not to be confused, both to safeguard the priority of grace and also to protect the reality of responsible human agency.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, according to Barth, there is specific ordering in the encounter between God and humanity:

The fellowship of God with man ... is fellowship in a specific and irreversible order before and after, above and below. God unconditionally precedes and man can only follow. The free God elects and wills. The free man must elect and will what God wills

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<sup>99</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 19. Barth explains that “As the true God is the God who is and acts and reveals himself in Jesus Christ, so true man is the man who is bound to him and set over against him in Jesus Christ,” *TCL*, 20.

<sup>100</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 27.

<sup>101</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 27-28.

<sup>102</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 28.

<sup>103</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 107, drawing on Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*.

and elects. God is the giver and man the recipient. Man is an active, not an inactive recipient, yet even in his activity he is still a recipient.<sup>104</sup>

The nature of the encounter between God and humanity and the appropriate response for Barth rests on understanding the relationship between law and gospel. Webster states:

Setting law within the context of election to the covenant, its role is redefined: no longer primarily accusatory, no longer a source of hostility to drive the sinner to repentance, the law incorporates into the relation of God and humanity that imperatival aspect which makes humanity under grace more than simply a beneficiary.<sup>105</sup>

For Barth, ethics can only refer to “the event – the many events – of the encounter between the commanding God and the man who acts.”<sup>106</sup> Barth articulates the reality of the command of God to humanity:

The command of God may always be recognized as such because, as the command of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man, it encounters man in the form of grace: not as the exponent of man’s own fantasies, wishes, and desires, nor as the dictate of an unknown deity coming upon him as an alien or enemy, but as the direction of him, who, apart from and even in opposition to man’s own acts and merits, loved him from all eternity, who understands him better than man does himself, who intends better for him than he does for himself, who with this better knowledge and intention, for his salvation, reminds him of his freedom, takes him seriously in this freedom, and summons him to make the only possible use of it. The command of God will infallibly make itself known as the law of the gospel.<sup>107</sup>

How do faithful men and women respond to the divine command? According to Barth, the appropriate and obedient human response to the gracious command of God is humble invocation of God and obedience through prayer.

We are speaking of the humble and resolute, the frightened and joyful *invocation* of the gracious God in gratitude, praise, and above all petition. In the sphere of the covenant, this is the normal action corresponding to the fulfilment of the covenant in Jesus Christ. Man is empowered for this, and obligated to it, by God’s grace. In it man in his whole humanity takes his proper place over against God. In it he does the central thing that precedes, accompanies, and follows all else he does. In it he acts as the one who is referred wholly to God and has absolute need of him. In it he ventures the turning to God for which no worthiness qualifies him. He does it in fearless hope on the basis that God has turned to him and summoned him to this venture.<sup>108</sup>

Barth argues that “We thus understand calling upon God – in all the richness of the action included in it – as the one thing in the many that the God who has reconciled the world to himself in Jesus Christ demands of man as he permits it to

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<sup>104</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 29. Barth continues by stating, “That God might withhold his direction and man his obedience is not foreseen in the covenant of grace. These are excluded possibilities,” Barth, *TCL*, 29.

<sup>105</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 111.

<sup>106</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 6. Barth explains the divine command as event, “The concept of the command of God denotes a dynamic reality. The command is that of the living God ... The command of God is the event in which God commands. It is a specific command of God in each specific form of his dealings with man, in each specific time, in relation to the presuppositions and consequences of each specific existence of each man,” *TCL*, 33.

<sup>107</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 35.

<sup>108</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 43.

him.”<sup>109</sup> In IV/1 Barth explains that Christians are commanded to give thanks in response to the death of Jesus Christ:

in striking contrast to the baffled question: ‘Who shall deliver me?’ thanks are actually ascribed to God in the light of His being and activity in Jesus Christ. The question itself remains unanswered, like the question of Jesus Christ on the cross: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ or like the whole question of Job. In the boldest possible anticipation, but one which is obviously self-evident to Paul the Christian and apostle, he looks back upon the question and all that it implies from the far distance ... All at once there is cause simply to be thankful.<sup>110</sup>

Jüngel notes that, for Barth, invocation “is the fundamental ethical analogy: that in our invocation of God commanded of us by the God whose ‘being is in act’, we are exalted to a life in act which corresponds to God, so that in our very relation to God we ‘may and should be truly active’.”<sup>111</sup> Robin Lovin explains that according to Barth, “We do not understand God’s action by apprehending the transcendental conditions of all existence, so that we might then know in advance what any future action of God will be like. We understand God by obedience to God’s will as we encounter it.”<sup>112</sup>

Reconciliation according to Barth includes both reconciliation and action between God and humanity and among individual men and women. Mangina notes that Barth’s understanding of invocation “neatly combines the vertical and the horizontal aspects of ethics.”<sup>113</sup> David Haddorff explains:

By placing the horizontal context of human moral relationships within the vertical relationship of God with humanity, Barth reverses the modern paradigm of both separating and reducing theology from and to ethics (or reducing the vertical to the horizontal dimension). Yet this decentering of the moral subject leads not to the ‘loss of the self’ but to a transformed self guided by the ethics of mutual correction, grounded in divine justification and forgiveness.<sup>114</sup>

Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation (and his writings about ethics) demands openness to both God’s relationship with humanity and humanity’s relationship and actions to one another. Mangina argues that for Barth, “Ethics begins with the divine command ‘Call upon me!’ – the vertical dimension; obedience to the command prompts us to call upon God for help – the horizontal dimension; and precisely this act marks a person’s liberation for joyful service of God and

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<sup>109</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 43.

<sup>110</sup> IV/1, 590.

<sup>111</sup> Jüngel, *Barth Studien*, 321, quoting *KD* II/1, 1 and *KD* IV/4, 167 (*CD* II/1, 1 and *CD* IV/4, 102).

<sup>112</sup> Robin W. Lovin, in “Foreword” to *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life* by Karl Barth, ix.

<sup>113</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 162.

<sup>114</sup> David Haddorff, “The Postmodern realism of Barth’s ethics,” in *SJT*, 57:3 (2004), 273-274. Haddorff notes that there is evidence of this ethical structure in Barth’s writings as early as *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.



neighbour – the Christian life.”<sup>115</sup> Barth explains this service, concern and action of the Christian for the neighbour:

Christians pray to God that he will cause his righteousness to appear and dwell on a new earth under a new heaven. Meanwhile they act in accordance with their prayer as people who are responsible for the rule of human righteousness, that is, for the preservation and renewal, the deepening and extending, of the divinely ordained human safeguards of human rights, human freedom, and human peace on earth.<sup>116</sup>

Because of Jesus Christ’s death upon the cross, men and women are reconciled to God and are called to respond in obedience to the grace of God.

Hauerwas is critical of Barth’s understanding of writings concerning ethics and the role of the church in the community of Christian. He explains that he is “bothered by a particular ‘abstractness’ to Barth’s ethics that gives his account of the moral life an aura of unreality.”<sup>117</sup> Hauerwas further comments that:

Barth treats the Christian life primarily in terms of events and acts, which, while repeatable, cannot contribute in a theologically significant way to the development of ourselves as men of character. Concrete acts and deeds may conform to God’s command but as such they contribute nothing towards man’s character. They may and in fact should exemplify a continuity, but it is a continuity from God’s point of view, not that of the human agent. Barth cannot allow or even hint that any aspect of the relationship between man and God might include a parallelism and harmony of the divine and human wills, but rather it can only be a series of ‘explosive encounters’.<sup>118</sup>

Barth does not define the relationship between God and humanity as a series of “explosive encounters” but as fellowship between God and humanity within the restored covenant. Biggar notes that Barth’s understanding of ethical encounter “consists in the history of the covenant of grace established by God with humankind.”<sup>119</sup> William Werpehowski observes, for Barth, “[W]e are concretely and currently implicated in a moral universe constituted by the history of God in Christ.”<sup>120</sup> Hauerwas’ concern that the Christian life fails to contribute to the development of character in people is misguided. According Barth, our character

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<sup>115</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 162.

<sup>116</sup> Barth, *TCL*, 205.

<sup>117</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “On Honour: By Way of Comparison of Barth and Trollope,” in *Reckoning with Barth*, ed. Nigel Biggar, (London: Mowbray, 1988), 149. Biggar defends Barth from this specific criticism, “Barth’s main intention was to write a systematic theology, and that his main intention with regard to ethics was to build it strictly within the framework of that theology. Accordingly, his driving ethical concern was to derive basic ethical concepts from, or at least ensure their qualification by, the tenets of Christian dogma; and not to depict the concrete texture of Christian life ... the claim could be made that Barth deliberately limited his ethical scope to the level of general concepts, leaving to others the task of filling in the detail,” *Hastening that Waits*, 140.

<sup>118</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985), 173.

<sup>119</sup> Biggar, *Hastening that Waits*, 29. Biggar notes, “This history takes its direction, its law, its order from the *telos* that God intends; namely, the future redemption of humankind in fulfilment of their destiny by creation, through God’s reconciling election of humanity in the real human being, Jesus Christ,” 29.

<sup>120</sup> William Werpehowski, “Narrative and Ethics in Barth,” in *Theology Today*, 43.3 (1986), 342.

is established in Jesus Christ. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is given to men and women and they are liberated to follow God's command. Contrary to Hauerwas' criticism, Barth argues that following the command of God provides moral formation in the human agent. Biggar explains that, for Barth:

moral dispositions grow precisely as the individual engages concretely with the particular moral tasks that his vocation presents to him ... moral formation always lies in front of the moral agent, and never simply behind him. Each human being is called by his Creator to make of his life a particular and unique service. The fulfilment of this service comprises the moral character he is commanded to be, and its requirements determine at each point who he should become. An individual, then, never already possesses his character but is always in the process of acquiring it in the history of his life.<sup>121</sup>

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation acknowledges that men and women are justified and sanctified (in hope), because they are in Jesus Christ (through the eternal decision by God to reconcile humanity through the death of Jesus Christ), not because of the ethical acts they perform. Men and women are obliged to follow God's command and live their unique personal vocation. We will explore Barth's writing about the rite of baptism and analyse his articulation of obedient human response in the following section.

#### **D. Barth's doctrine of baptism**

To comprehend how Barth understands proper human response to the divine act of reconciliation that occurred in Jesus Christ's death on the cross, it is important to recognise the development of Barth's writings concerning baptism. Daniel Migliore states, "Barth's theology of baptism underwent important, and even dramatic, changes from the first edition of his commentary on Romans to the final fragment of the *Church Dogmatics* published shortly before his death."<sup>122</sup> Reactions to Barth's views of baptism have been mixed. Migliore argues that "Eberhard Jüngel rightly observes that the final version of Barth's doctrine of baptism should be viewed not as a curious appendix but as a kind of test case as to whether one has appropriately understood what Barth has been up to all along in the *Church Dogmatics*."<sup>123</sup> Others disagree, including T. F. Torrance, who argues that Barth's final account of baptism is "deeply inconsistent" with the

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<sup>121</sup> Biggar, *Hastening that Waits*, 134-135, referring to III/4, 389-90.

<sup>122</sup> Daniel Migliore, "Reforming the Theology and Practice of Baptism: The Challenge of Karl Barth," *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, eds. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 494. For a thorough analysis of Barth's doctrine of baptism (including discussion of contributions to this topic by Jüngel, Webster and Hunsinger) see Richardson, *Reading Karl Barth*, 176-208.

<sup>123</sup> Migliore, "Reforming the Theology," 504.

incarnational and trinitarian structure of the *Church Dogmatics*, and presents a “sacramental dualism” in which “the meaning of baptism is found not in a direct act of God but in an ethical act on the part of man”.<sup>124</sup> However, Jüngel counters that Barth’s doctrine of baptism does not lead to a dualism, because, if properly understood, water baptism represents an analogy (*analogatum*) or a self-attestation of what the believer is in Jesus Christ (*analogans*).<sup>125</sup> Webster’s overall reaction is negative, yet he acknowledges there is consistency among Barth’s doctrines:

Read as an essay on sacramental theology, the fragment is rather obviously unsatisfactory. The exegesis is sometimes surprisingly shoddy, dominated by special pleading, as well as what seems at times an almost Platonic distinction between water baptism (an exclusively human act) and baptism with the Spirit (an exclusively divine act ... In another sense, however, the baptism fragment shows strong consistency with the overarching theme of the *Church Dogmatics*, God and humanity in covenantal relation.<sup>126</sup>

Barth’s writings on baptism continue to challenge current ecclesial practices and provoke debate among readers.

In analysing Barth’s mature understanding of baptism, it should be noted that a significant turning point came in 1938 while Barth was acting as the Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Basel. While lecturing on dogmatics and 1 Peter, Busch comments that Barth, “in a seminar on baptism for the first time ‘came to a completely negative conclusion over Calvin’s argument for infant baptism, at any rate.’”<sup>127</sup> Barth’s negative critique of Calvin’s theological argument for infant baptism found expression in a lecture given on 7 May 1943 to theological students in Gwatt, which was published in 1947 as “The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism.” Barth criticizes Calvin for baptizing infants in his congregation to comfort pious parents who were overly anxious about the faith of their children. According to Barth, the church refuses to stop the practice of infant baptism for fear of relinquishing power within the state and society. He argues, “If she were to break with infant baptism, the Church would not easily any longer be a people’s church in the sense of a state Church or a church of the masses.”<sup>128</sup> Barth argues, “Baptism without the willingness and readiness of the baptized is true, effectual

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<sup>124</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 99.

<sup>125</sup> Jüngel, *Barth Studien*, 292.

<sup>126</sup> Webster, *Barth*, 157. Webster continues by explaining, “For part of what stimulates Barth to make such a clear separation of water and Spirit baptism is an ethics concern: a desire to indicate that at the beginning of the Christian life there is a distinctive form of human endeavour, subservient to the work of the Spirit but nevertheless genuine and real,” 157.

<sup>127</sup> Busch, *Karl Barth: His life from letters*, 286, quoting a letter from Barth dated 1 September 1938.

<sup>128</sup> Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*. tr. Ernest A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1948), 52-53.

and effective baptism, but it is not correct; it is not done in obedience, it is not administered according to the proper order, and therefore it is necessarily clouded baptism. It must and ought not to be repeated.”<sup>129</sup> These views are developed and presented twenty years later in the final fragment of *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/4.

Understanding the context of the doctrine of baptism in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/4 in relation to the other doctrines is essential for understanding Barth's theology as a whole. Migliore states that “Barth's doctrine of baptism is embedded in his entire theology and lights up its central themes. What Barth says about baptism in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/4 is a key to the intention of the whole of the *Church Dogmatics*: to affirm the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ as the basis and goal of true human freedom in partnership with God.”<sup>130</sup> For Barth, baptism is one part of the faithful human response to God's gracious act of reconciliation that occurred in Jesus Christ. It is essential to recognise that Barth's doctrine of baptism is formulated from his doctrines of election and Christology. Richardson explains:

The christological grounding of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation determines the concept of baptism and the structure of the doctrine of baptism in the doctrine of reconciliation. Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is the basis for understanding the being of Jesus Christ as a history that has revealed the reconciliation of all human beings and their world by God, destroying the traditional theological concept of baptism as a sacrament. This understanding of the being of Jesus Christ is basic to Barth's doctrine of the being of the elect man in Jesus from the beginning with God.<sup>131</sup>

In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV, Barth understands the Christian life in response to God's gracious reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ to include three aspects: the public declaration of baptism with water, the life of prayer (focusing on the Lord's Prayer), and the communal celebration of the Lord's Supper. According to Migliore, “Recognition of this wider context of Barth's treatise on baptism helps to clarify his intent to follow the portrayal of God's astonishing freedom for the world in the history of Jesus Christ (IV/ 1-3) with the depiction of Christian life as a free, mature, and glad human response to God's free grace.”<sup>132</sup> Barth's concern to uphold and emphasize the freedom of God and the freedom of humanity, the order and sequence of the eternal divine decision to be with and for

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<sup>129</sup> Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, 40.

<sup>130</sup> Migliore, “Reforming the Theology,” 499. Richardson observes that “If readers miss even the last volume (IV/4) or render it somehow as a mere appendage, they violate Barth's witness and his intent to conform his thought to the content of revelation, even if that means assuming the role of a solitary reformer,” *Reading Karl Barth*, 17.

<sup>131</sup> Richardson, *Reading Karl Barth*, 185.

<sup>132</sup> Migliore, “Reforming the Theology,” 500.

humanity, the activity of the Holy Spirit, and humanity's grateful and obedient response are features through the entire *Church Dogmatics* and reaches its final goal in Barth's doctrine of baptism.

Comparing *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/4 with Barth's earlier writings on baptism Migliore states:

In this, his 'last word on the subject,' Barth radicalizes the position he adopted in the 1940's ... Barth now emphatically rejects the description of baptism as a sacrament, speaks of baptism primarily as an act of witness, sharply distinguishes between Spirit baptism and water baptism, and argues that water baptism is properly interpreted not as a divine but as a strictly human act.<sup>133</sup>

Barth's understanding of baptism as a sacrament and as a single exclusive act of God in his early writings evolved into an understanding of baptism as a two-fold activity with baptism by the Spirit occurring as an action of God, and baptism with water occurring as a faithful and obedient human response to God's action in the Spirit. As God desires fellowship and relationship with humanity and acts to restore a right relationship between the triune God and men and women through Jesus Christ, humanity is then free to respond to the love and grace of God with the public confession and action of water baptism, which Barth understood as the first action in the life of the Christian. Richardson states:

The command to be baptized is the explication of the knowable ground of Christian baptism in the baptism of Jesus. In interpreting this ground of Christian baptism, Barth notes the unreserved subjection of Jesus to God, the unreserved solidarity of Jesus with human beings, and Jesus' appearance as servant as the first and foundational act of his self-proclamation. The baptism of Jesus is the 'necessary ground' for understanding that obedience that is carried out in water baptism.<sup>134</sup>

It is important to note the progression of Barth's thoughts about sacramentology beginning with *Church Dogmatics* volume I before discussing the final volume. In volume I/1, Barth contemplates the Word of God as a threefold witness of the preached, written and revealed Word. According to Barth, the proclamation of the church includes preaching and the administration of the rites of baptism and the Eucharist. The sacramental rites are part of the function of the church's proclamation witness to God's action of reconciliation. Barth explains:

proclamation is the sacrament, i.e., the symbolical act which is carried through in the Church as directed by the biblical witness of revelation in accompaniment and confirmation of preaching and which is designed as such to attest the event of divine revelation, reconciliation and vocation which does not merely fulfil but underlines the promise.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Migliore, "Reforming the Theology," 498-499. Migliore is quoting Barth in IV/4, ix.

<sup>134</sup> Richardson, *Reading Karl Barth*, 184.

<sup>135</sup> I/1, 56.



Barth explains that the sacramental rites and preaching are the Word of God only as they *become* the Word of God.

Proclamation and the Church are, of course, simply and visibly there just as the bread and wine of Communion are simply and visibly there and the distributing, eating and drinking of the bread and wine in Communion take place simply and visibly. They are not simply and visibly there, however, as that which they want to be and should be, as theologically relevant entities, as realities or revelation and faith. They have ever and again to come into being this.<sup>136</sup>

Church proclamation and the administration of the sacraments must ever again become events in the life of the church, founded on the Word of God, if they are to be more than purely human actions. They must continually seek God's revelation and seek to be true to the witness of Scripture and God's revelation in Jesus Christ, which are known through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In *Church Dogmatics* volume II/1, Barth discusses the "sacramental reality" of Jesus Christ as part of his doctrine of election. He states, "The basic reality and substance of the creatureliness which He has commissioned and empowered to speak of Him, the basic reality and substance of the sacramental reality of His revelation, is the existence of the human nature of Jesus Christ."<sup>137</sup> The humanity of Jesus Christ, for Barth, is a sacrament: "not of and by itself, but of and by God's appointment and grace, the creature can be the temple, instrument and sign of God Himself."<sup>138</sup> It is here, in the person of Jesus Christ that men and women come to knowledge of God. "Revelation occurs in the form of this sacramental reality, i.e., in such a way that God elevates and selects a definite creaturely subject-object relationship to be the instrument of the covenant between Himself the Creator and man as His creature."<sup>139</sup> Barth stresses the sacramental reality of Jesus Christ as humanity comes to know God through the incarnation and the event of the cross. In *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/1 Barth describes the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and explains the influence of the cross on the lives of humanity:

The confession of Christians, their suffering, their repentance, their prayer, their humility, their works, baptism, too, and the Lord's Supper can and should attest this event but only attest it. The event itself, the event of the death of man, is that of the death of Jesus Christ on Golgotha: no other event, no earlier and no later, no event which simply prepares the way for it, no event which has to give to it the character of an actual event. This is the one *mysterium*, the one sacrament, and the one existential

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<sup>136</sup> I/1, 88.

<sup>137</sup> II/1, 53.

<sup>138</sup> II/1, 54.

<sup>139</sup> II/1, 55.

fact before and beside and after which there is no room for any other of the same rank.<sup>140</sup>

Webster explains that for Barth "Jesus Christ is the one sacrament of the church, therefore, in the sense that the perfection of his work *includes* its effectiveness in human history, rendering superfluous any human mediations, experiential or ecclesial or sacramental."<sup>141</sup> Barth's definition of Jesus Christ as the primary sacramental reality influences his understanding of water baptism and the Lord's Supper as human actions performed in response to the divine grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Barth begins *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/4 with two sentences that summarise his thoughts on baptism:

A man's turning to faithfulness to God, and consequently to calling upon Him, is the work of this faithful God, which, perfectly accomplished in the history of Jesus Christ, in virtue of the awakening, quickening and illuminating power of this history, becomes a new beginning of life as his baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The first step of this life of faithfulness to God, the Christian life, is a man's baptism with water, which by his own decision is requested of the community and which is administered by the community, as the binding confession of his obedience, conversion and hope, made in prayer for God's grace, wherein he honours the freedom of this grace.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> IV/1, 296. McDowell cautions that "IV/4 argues for the exclusive christological identification of the 'sacraments': Jesus Christ as the one and only *mysterion*, an odd move given the fact that in his earlier writings Barth had spoken of the single Word of God in three forms," *Hope in Barth's Eschatology*, 233. Given the development of the doctrine of election, this change in Barth's definition (and scope) of the sacraments is not surprising. The eternal election of the gracious event that reconciles the world to God and the witnesses to or revelations of that specific means of grace should not be confused. Richardson explains, "The differentiation between Spirit baptism and water baptism parallels fully Barth's differentiation in *KD* IV/1-3 between Jesus Christ as the Word of God (*analogans*) and Christian proclamation (*analogatum*) (i.e., self-presentation of Jesus Christ [*analogans*]) and the corresponding formation of the Christian existence of this self-presentation (*analogatum*)," *Reading Karl Barth*, 185. Yet, Hunsinger proposes that Barth's original threefold Word of God may be employed to include the sacraments. He argues that "A properly Protestant (and Barthian) position would conceive the threefold sacrament as under the control of the threefold Word at each point (i.e. Christ as the eternal Word/Christ as sacrament; scripture/church; proclamation/baptism and eucharist)," in "Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness," 255. This could only be labelled "Barthian" if one makes the same distinction between Jesus Christ the Word and one true sacrament, and the other two secondary forms, as Barth does.

<sup>141</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 128. Webster explains Barth's caution concerning the sacraments: "Sacramental acts, like religion, can become a means of setting aside God's immediate activity in self-communication by tying our encounter with God to the existence and operation of some natural factor. Barth, therefore, reads both sacraments and religion as almost inevitably trespassing upon divine sovereignty in the area of the application of the benefits of Christ's saving work," *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 130.

<sup>142</sup> IV/4, 2. Barth recognised that his views of baptism would not be popular, but believed it was essential to publish it before his death. Barth states: "Some years ago I composed and published a little work on this theme *The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism*. In the meantime, however, I have come to rather a different view of the matter. Since this earlier work is thus outdated from my own standpoint, I should not like it to be regarded and quoted as my last word on the subject," IV/4, ix. Barth continues, "I foresee that this book, which by my human

Barth considers these two sentences that describe God's turning toward humanity in the power of the Holy Spirit and humanity's turning toward God in obedient response as the foundation of the Christian life. Webster argues that for Barth, baptism "is to be understood against the background of an ordered correspondence between a prevenient, causative divine act of saving grace, and a subsequent human act of confession, thanksgiving, and obedience."<sup>143</sup> But how does a person become Christian and respond to God? Barth states:

It is God's power to draw and turn, so that this man will voluntarily and by his own decision choose that which God in His grace has already chosen for him, and in this choice he will be one who is converted to God instead of apostate from him, one who confesses God instead of one who denies Him, a friend instead of an enemy, a man who is no longer unserviceable but serviceable, a witness to God instead of one who brings shame upon Him, in short, a man who is no longer unfaithful to God but faithful to Him. The Christian life has its true source in this change which God brings about in man.<sup>144</sup>

It is the power and action of God that draws men and women to the divine, but it is the voluntary decision of each called woman and man to respond obediently to God's gracious love. The freedom of God that grounds humanity's free ability to be faithful and obedient is grounded in the free and obedient, divine and human action in the history of Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ, His history, became and is the foundation of Christian existence; this and this alone."<sup>145</sup> The Christian life for women and men is possible only in union with Jesus Christ. Barth describes this union with Christ as an event that is both outside and inside individual men and women, as the history of Jesus Christ occurred in time and space outside other individual people, yet is effective as an action "for us" which then becomes "in us."

The action of God in the history of Jesus Christ has its origin in God's initiative, yet others are included in this reconciliation and Jesus' history becomes their history. Barth writes:

In His resurrection His perfected history began to come to light both intensively and extensively in the world, in all other human history ... In the work of the Holy Spirit

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judgement will be my last major publication, will leave me in the theological and ecclesiastical isolation which has been my lot for almost fifty years. I am thus about to make a poor exit with it. So be it! The day will come when justice will be done to me in this matter too," IV/4, xii. Hunsinger would agree with the description of a "poor exit" as he comments, "Dividing water baptism from Spirit baptism is not false. It is nonsense. It represents a basic confusion about the conditions for the possibility for discourse on this topic. Barth's account in this case is confused," in "Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness," in *IJST*, 2:3 (2000), 257.

<sup>143</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 117.

<sup>144</sup> IV/4, 6.

<sup>145</sup> IV/4, 14.

the history manifested to all men in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is manifest and present to a specific man as his own salvation history.<sup>146</sup>

The perfection of the work of Jesus Christ needs no human assistance, but is mediated to humanity through the Holy Spirit.

The divine change, man's baptism with the Holy Spirit, is not half-grace, or half-adequate grace; it is whole grace and wholly adequate grace. It is not just an incitement given to man, but his quickening. It is not just his enlightenment [*Beleuchtung*] from without, but a lighting up from within [*feurige Erleuchtung von innen*]. It deserves and demands full, unreserved and unconditional gratitude.<sup>147</sup>

Barth elucidates his understanding of the divine act of baptism with the Holy Spirit with a summary of five points. First, "the beginning of the Christian life takes place in a direct self-attestation and self-impartation of the living Jesus Christ."<sup>148</sup> Second, the divine act which is the foundation of the Christian life is grace that actually reconciles the world to God and addresses specific individuals. Third, as a free act of grace, the divine action demands obedient response and gratitude from women and men.<sup>149</sup> Fourth, the divine act of baptism by the Spirit brings about a new life of Christian obedience and distinctive fellowship with other believers as the body and witness of Christ. Finally, the baptism of the Spirit has an eschatological dimension that marks the beginning of a new Christian life in the lives of individuals, yet is only the beginning and never is complete, definitive, or self-sufficient.<sup>150</sup> The baptism of the Spirit marks a new hope-filled beginning for men and women as followers of Jesus Christ and frees them for service as disciples and witnesses to the triune God. Webster notes that Barth's rejection of the sacramental character of baptism with water is made "for *ethical* reasons: the clear distinction between divine and human agency is not an invalidation of human action, but its liberation to be truly human, responsive to, and not absorbed within or instrumental to, an overruling act of God."<sup>151</sup> Barth believes that the first public confession of this new life and the first testimonial witness to the working and calling of the Holy Spirit should be the ecclesial rite of baptism with water.

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<sup>146</sup> IV/4, 24, 27.

<sup>147</sup> IV/4, 35.

<sup>148</sup> IV/4, 31.

<sup>149</sup> Webster makes an important observation concerning this point: "Once human reality is understood as *essentially* that which God constitutes in Jesus, and once life in grace is seen as originally and properly human (not as an accidental modification of some larger category of human being), then human freedom is no longer a sphere from which we may observe God's command and choose to obey or disobey. 'Freedom' is allegiance to what by the Holy Spirit the human person inescapably is," *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 144.

<sup>150</sup> IV/4, 31-40.

<sup>151</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 132.

As the counterpart to the divine action, human decision and obedience follow the divine action and calling of the Holy Spirit, yet Barth emphasizes that the two events must be firmly held together.

Only as the two are seen together in differentiated unity can one understand them ... Each of the elements both individually and also in correlation, and therefore the totality of the event, will be misunderstood if it is either separated from or, instead of being distinguished, mixed together or confused with the other.<sup>152</sup>

Barth holds together the divine action of baptism by the Spirit with the faithful human obedient response of baptism with water, but distinguishes the two events. He argues:

To see their distinction in unity is especially important at this point where we are concerned with the beginning of the relation between the God who commands in His grace and the responsible action of the man who is grateful to this God. It is particularly important at this point where our concern is the foundation of the Christian life, and where a decision has thus to be made on whose precise correctness all further ethical reflection will depend.<sup>153</sup>

Baptism by the Spirit and baptism with water are two distinct acts, yet this differentiated unity between divine action and human action must be held together in unity in order to comprehend the meaning of both acts. James Buckley explains:

The divine action is united to the human action insofar as the life and death of Jesus, which took place on our behalf, become a 'pledge and promise' for everyone in the resurrection and for the community in the work of the Spirit; the human action is united to the divine action insofar as the human action has its basis in Jesus' baptism and its goal in baptism with the Holy Spirit. In sum, the differentiated unity of divine and human action in baptism comes from and heads toward Jesus Christ; it is only in the movement from its origin to its goal that the divine action (baptism with the Holy Spirit) and human action (baptism with water) form a differentiated unity.<sup>154</sup>

Barth briefly discusses the New Testament evidence for baptism with water at the beginning of his discussion of the human act of water baptism. Baptism in the New Testament is a parallel rite to the historical water baptism that the Jewish community administered to those who joined the Synagogue. The rite of washing with water was self-evident to the New Testament church, and therefore it is surprising, for Barth, that the New Testament does not contain more references to baptism than it does. According to Barth, the New Testament illustrates examples

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<sup>152</sup> IV/4, 41. Hunsinger fears that Barth's treatment of baptism fails adequately to illustrate this unity in distinction and warns that as presented Spirit baptism and water baptism are "bifurcated from each other," *Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness*, 248. The above quote by Barth makes it clear that he understands the Spirit baptism and water baptism must be held together in differentiated unity.

<sup>153</sup> IV/4, 41.

<sup>154</sup> James Buckley, "Christian community, baptism and the Lord's Supper," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 204.



of new believers hearing the word and having faith and then asking for baptism, all of which is indebted to God's calling. The presence of a community of believers is essential as baptism is not a self-administered rite, but the presence of the community which acknowledges the faith of the one to be baptised is an essential component of the rite.<sup>155</sup>

Barth then devotes a considerable amount of text to articulating the *basis*, the *goal* and the *meaning* of baptism with water. For Barth, the basis of baptism is not the ecclesial tradition, but the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 taken together with the New Testament witness of the baptism of Jesus Christ. In his analysis of Jesus' baptism, Barth notes that with this act, Jesus subordinated himself to the service of God and "entered upon His office as Messiah, Saviour and Mediator in an act of unconditional and irrevocable submission to the will of His Father."<sup>156</sup> At his baptism Jesus also placed himself in solidarity with humanity by becoming human: "because He is committed unreservedly to subordination to God, therefore He is committed unreservedly to solidarity with men."<sup>157</sup> At his baptism Jesus freely and obediently entered "the service which was assigned and commanded Him in and His election and sending: the service of His one life as Messiah and Saviour which was lived wholly for God and therefore wholly for men."<sup>158</sup> For Barth the basis of Christian baptism with water is the not only the command of Jesus, but the also the entire obedient life and death of Jesus that was submissive to the will of God and in solidarity with sinful humanity. In Barth's description of baptism, he says very little about the remission of sins. Barth's ethical orientation of water baptism explains why the remission of sins is not essential to the rite of baptism. Barth acknowledges the sinner's radical passage from life to death, however, for Barth: "that passage has already been effected in Christ; 'conversion' takes place on Good Friday and Easter Day, and the Christian's coming to faith is an attestation, not a realisation, of the fact that sin and death have already been cast away by the divine 'No'."<sup>159</sup>

After discussing the basis for water baptism, Barth turns to articulating its goal. He argues, "We may first say very generally that the goal of baptism is God's act of reconciliation in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, God's act of

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<sup>155</sup> IV/4, 44-50.

<sup>156</sup> IV/4, 54.

<sup>157</sup> IV/4, 58.

<sup>158</sup> IV/4, 60.

<sup>159</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 153.

judgement and grace, of salvation and revelation.”<sup>160</sup> The goal of baptism with water lies outside of itself in the reconciliation of humanity and God through the event of the cross. Baptism with water is the public confession of the work and word of God. “It is the first step by which they publicly and bindingly confess and commit themselves to their recognised and acknowledged Lord as Mediator of the covenant, and also to the mutual fellowship of Christians.”<sup>161</sup> As a public confession of faith, baptism with water bears witness to God’s prior activity of baptism with the Spirit. For Barth, baptism with water is “the first concrete step of the human decision of faith and obedience corresponding thereto in so far as it is resolutely and exclusively movement to Him, and thus the true baptism of conversion.”<sup>162</sup> Migliore summarises Barth’s understanding of the goal of baptism: “The goal is God’s own act of judgement and grace in Jesus Christ, which is both an accomplished and a promised and a coming reality.”<sup>163</sup> There is a past, present and future reality to the witness of baptism with water as the Christian confesses the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus, witnesses to the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her present life, and awaits the eschatological fulfilment in eternity.

Barth ends his discussion on baptism with water by discussing the meaning of baptism. Barth understands baptism with water as a rite in which humanity, in freedom, witnesses and acts in a corresponding manner to the free and gracious action of God. “The men who act in baptism do what they do (if they do it aright) in the light of what God has done for them in Jesus Christ and what He does on them through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>164</sup> Water baptism is a human response and witness to the working of God within the life of the Christian believer. Migliore explains:

The meaning of water baptism is that it is a free human act which attests and corresponds to the liberating, forgiving, reconciling, promising grace of God in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Water baptism does not duplicate, supplement, or complete the work of God in Jesus Christ with our own work.<sup>165</sup>

Barth stresses water baptism is a free human response and testimony performed in obedience and hope in response to the acknowledged and present action of God. Webster cautions that failure “to grasp the character of baptism with water as a

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<sup>160</sup> IV/4, 72.

<sup>161</sup> IV/4, 72.

<sup>162</sup> IV/4, 90.

<sup>163</sup> Migliore, “Reforming the Theology,” 501.

<sup>164</sup> IV/4, 132.

<sup>165</sup> Migliore, “Reforming the Theology,” 501.

human work is to confuse divine and human action by envisaging the real meaning of water baptism as some 'immanent divine work'.<sup>166</sup> It is in order to uphold humanity as an ethical agent that Barth rejects the traditional sacramental understanding of baptism. Barth explains his "objection to the sacramental interpretation of baptism is directed against this conjuring away of the free man whom God liberates and summons to his own free and responsible action."<sup>167</sup>

Water baptism should mark one's conversion to follow the will of God, should be the first obedient act in the Christian life, and should be publicly confessed before God and others in the faith community.

Conversion to God summons, leads, drives and impels, to baptism, to its human confirmation in the human sphere. In baptism as a reflection of the divine work and word to which a man responds with his conversion, he confesses not only before God but also before the community and all men that, humbly awaiting its confirmation by God, he will give this answer to the best of his ability.<sup>168</sup>

Barth recognises that instruction in the Christian faith should occur prior to the rite of baptism. He states: "The point of this instruction – this is the reason why it comes first – is that the candidates should not be overtaken and surprised by baptism ... but that they should have been set in a position and in a readiness so to seek and desire baptism that they know what they are doing in the matter."<sup>169</sup> Baptizing infants and then instructing young church members through a process of confirmation is backwards and does not allow the baptized to make the obedient response in faith commanded of them.

According to Barth, baptism is a community event: "When a man is baptized and the community baptizes him, they place themselves together – this is the obedience of faith which is the meaning of baptism – under the justification and sanctification of sinful man which has been perfectly accomplished and perfectly revealed in God's work and word in Jesus Christ."<sup>170</sup> For the one being baptized and the participating community there is both a renunciation and a pledge. "Confirmed in baptism are God's No and God's Yes to man."<sup>171</sup> The former life of sin and unbelief is renounced and a pledge to the new faithful and obedient life of reconciliation is confessed. Migliore explains that, "Grounded in God's own renunciation of human sin and God's own pledge of new life in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, water baptism marks our own

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<sup>166</sup> Webster, *Ethics of Reconciliation*, 156.

<sup>167</sup> IV/4, 106.

<sup>168</sup> IV/4, 145.

<sup>169</sup> IV/4, 152.

<sup>170</sup> IV/4, 158.

<sup>171</sup> IV/4, 158.

corresponding renunciation of sin and pledge to live in new life and service to God.”<sup>172</sup> The obedient response and confession of faith in the rite of water baptism marks the beginning of the Christian life as one strives to live in submission to the will of God as a participating member of the church community and the body of Christ.

Barth’s definition of water baptism as a free and obedient response to the gracious action of God takes seriously the participation and acknowledgement of adult Christians. He argues, “we do genuinely have a free and responsible choosing and rejecting, affirming and negating, a human decision. Those who participate in baptism are summoned, empowered and in the full sense ordered by God to take the decision as such.”<sup>173</sup> Women and men are recognised as meaningful partners in God’s covenant with their free decision to respond to God’s calling. “Matters are not decided over their heads. They are not just objects who are discussed, moved and pushed around.”<sup>174</sup> Barth implores the modern churches to reconsider their practise of infant baptism because, as it is currently practiced, the rite does not correspond to the two-fold action of God’s gracious calling and humanity’s free and obedient response.

This is just one of Barth’s critiques of the practise of infant baptism. Barth also points to the New Testament witness to support his argument, stating that the New Testament stories of baptism tell of adults who were baptized after they had confessed their faith in Jesus Christ. He critiques the rite of baptism that was fundamentally changed beginning “from the end of the second century”<sup>175</sup> and argues that the Reformers, specifically Luther and Calvin, failed effectively to reform the ecclesial rite and develop a proper theology of baptism as they attempted to articulate sound church doctrine. “There has been no place at which there could even be any question of thinking that the candidate to whom we have constantly referred as a partner of the community in baptism might be an infant, an unconscious child, who is qualified for the position by his Christian parents.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Migliore, “Reforming the Theology,” 502.

<sup>173</sup> IV/4, 163.

<sup>174</sup> IV/4, 163.

<sup>175</sup> IV/4, 164.

<sup>176</sup> IV/4, 165-166. Barth criticises the Reformers’ lack of theological explanation concerning infant baptism: “We have found (1) that the introduction of infant baptism was not prepared or anchored in their general doctrine of baptism, or indeed their theology as a whole, (2) that they could present their thesis only with suspicious heat and irritation, (3) that they were easily entangled in contradictions of their own premises, and (4) that in what they proved they strangely omitted what had to be proved,” IV/4, 179.

Barth cautions against the modern church's use of infant baptism primarily because it has a lengthy historical tradition. Even children that are born into and educated in a Christian household must still come to faith and confess their Christian beliefs, because their status as a Christian believer is not automatically guaranteed as a result of family heritage or as a result of their participation in the rite infant baptism.

Another weakness of the rite of infant baptism, Barth argues, is that infant baptism stands in need of supplementation and cannot stand alone as a church rite. The process of confirmation is required to instruct young people years after the rite of baptism. He questions, "what is the point of this action which is abstracted from baptism, which follows it fifteen years later, when it really ought to come first, when it ought to be the meaning of baptism as such?"<sup>177</sup> The process of instruction, acknowledgment of faith, and then obedient response in adult baptism allows the rite of baptism to mark one's entry into the church community and remain an act without this need for additional supplementation. Following this three-part process of instruction, acknowledgement of faith, and obedient response, men and women understand themselves as reconciled and called by God and may participate in the life and up-building of the Christian community in prayer and fellowship.

Barth stresses baptism should be the first act of confession and the act that signifies one's entry into the community of faith, but it is expected that other acts will follow baptism. After baptism "[t]he whole of the further progress on the way which they plainly enter here can consist only in further responses to the Word of God which they accepted here, and hence in mere repetitions and variations of the grasping and exercising of this hope."<sup>178</sup> The rite of baptism is only a starting point, and many other steps are commanded and required after this action. "A whole life, longer or shorter, attaches itself to baptism. Lived under this as its sign, it is the Christian life."<sup>179</sup>

Barth ends *Church Dogmatics* volume IV/4 by stating that baptism, as the first human response to God's gracious calling, is an act done in hope and performed as a prayer. "Baptism is as such a human action in which the participants look beyond themselves and what they do into the future."<sup>180</sup> The

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<sup>177</sup> IV/4, 189.

<sup>178</sup> IV/4, 198.

<sup>179</sup> IV/4, 202.

<sup>180</sup> IV/4, 206.



person and work of Jesus Christ is the foundation and goal of Christian hope for the future.

The Christian life which begins with baptism can thus be a life in which they are not alone and left to their own devices with all the very dubious things which are certainly to be expected on their side. It is a life in which, whether they realise and experience it or not, He is with them and among them every hour of every day.<sup>181</sup>

As Christians attempt to live a life according to the will of God, they do so in a life of prayer and invocation. Barth recognises prayer as an essential part of the ecclesial rite of baptism and understands prayer as a foundation for the Christian life after one is baptized.

Where there is prayer, man's relationship to God is corrected and it is in order. Because and to the degree that baptism is prayer, the participants act in this order ... They let God be God, but they let Him be their God, who has called them and to whom they may call in return, who hears them and is heard as they may hear Him, and hearing, obey Him.<sup>182</sup>

After baptism, Christians are expected and commanded to live lives of ethical reflection in hope and (with) prayer as they await the final coming of Christ. Barth's instruction concerning baptism mirrors the gracious act of God reconciling the world and allows the believer to respond to the reconciling love of God and the event of the cross.

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<sup>181</sup> IV/4, 207.

<sup>182</sup> IV/4, 210.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

In the final volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, in paragraph 59, Karl Barth states:

All theology, both that which follows and indeed that which precedes the doctrine of reconciliation, depends upon this *theologia crucis* ... Everything depends upon the fact that the Lord who became servant, the Son of God who went into the far country, and came to us, was and did all this for us; that He fulfilled, and fulfilled in this way, the divine judgement laid upon Him.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis explored the significance of the event of the cross in Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Focusing on paragraph 59.2, "The Judge judged in our place," this thesis systematically analysed the role of the event of the cross and articulated how the event of the cross performs a significant role in Barth's doctrines of revelation, God, election, and reconciliation. This thesis also investigated the way in which the event of the cross is an essential aspect of Barth's writings concerning Christology, pneumatology, and ethics. By analysing the identity of the Judge, the act of the divine judgement that occurs in the event of the cross, and how Jesus Christ was judged in place of humanity, this thesis argues that, according to Barth, the event of the cross reveals the triune God, reconciles God and humanity, and elicits human response. Throughout this thesis the writings of Jürgen Moltmann concerning the event of the cross have been compared with Barth's views. Moltmann was selected not only because his writings have significant influence on present theological discourse, but also because he was familiar with Barth's theology, was critical of some aspects of Barth's theology, and attempted to correct the problems he perceived.

Chapter one of this thesis explored some of the ways Barth's theology has been misread and inappropriately labelled. G. C. Berkouwer calls Barth's doctrine of reconciliation "triumph theology" which fails to appreciate the seriousness of the cross and the scope of the event of the cross in the *Church Dogmatics*. Herbert Hartwell rightly argues that in Barth's theology the judgement of God's No (as pronounced in the event of the cross) can only be understood together with God's Yes. However, Hartwell fails to explain adequately the significance of the event of the cross in the *Church Dogmatics* and neglects to articulate that, according to Barth, the judgement of the cross would be effective and complete even if the

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<sup>1</sup> IV/1, 273.

resurrection had not occurred. As stated in chapter one, Gustaf Wingren argues that Barth emphasises the revelation of God and the event of the incarnation over the events of the cross and resurrection. This misreading fails to articulate the importance of Barth's use of the event of the cross in God's Self-revelation and the doctrine of God.

In chapter two this thesis argued that, for Barth, the event of the cross reveals the sin of humanity and illustrates the need for reconciliation between God and humanity. According to Barth, the serious and terrible nature of human corruption and sin is judged in such a way that human sin is put to death in God's own person.<sup>2</sup> This chapter demonstrated that according to Barth, sin and the restoration of the covenant necessitated the event of the cross, in contrast to Moltmann's understanding of the event of the cross that emphasises the salvific nature of suffering and abandonment of Jesus Christ by God.

In chapter three this thesis explored the first part of Barth's fourfold articulation of reconciliation that occurs when the Judge becomes the judged by demonstrating the significance of the event of the cross in Barth's doctrines of God and election. This chapter argued that the true identity of God is revealed in the works of God. According to Barth, the Self-revealed identity of the triune God in the work and person of Jesus Christ (and his death on the cross) illustrates that from eternity God ordains to judge the sin of humanity in the death of Jesus Christ.

Chapter four explored the second part of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation by analysing the identity of the person of Jesus Christ. According to Barth, Jesus Christ is the Subject of election who bears the divine judgement. This chapter traced the development of Barth's Christology in light of his doctrines of God and election and demonstrated how Barth articulates the actuality of Jesus Christ with reference to the two states of humiliation and exaltation and the threefold office of Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.

The third part of Barth's fourfold description of the reconciling act of the Judge judged in place of humanity was explored in chapter five through an analysis of the development of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation as found in the *Church Dogmatics* volume II "The Doctrine of God" and volume IV "The Doctrine of Reconciliation." This chapter argued that Barth's doctrine of reconciliation emphasises both the suffering and the obedience of Jesus Christ

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<sup>2</sup> IV/1, 412.

who experienced the judgement of sin in place of humanity in contrast to Moltmann who primarily focuses on the solidarity of Christ who suffers with humanity without the same attention to human sin.

Chapter six of this thesis investigated the fourth aspect of the Judge judged in place of humanity by focusing on the righteousness of Jesus Christ as the One who acts “for us” and “in our place.” Barth argues that in the person of Jesus Christ the judgement and death that men and women deserve is experienced by God for us and in our place.<sup>3</sup> The sin of humanity that disrupts the covenant between God and humanity is judged in the event of the cross and men and women are reconciled to God. However, in contrast Moltmann focuses upon present human suffering and victimisation and argues that Jesus Christ’s suffering on the cross is salvific because God shares in the suffering of the world.<sup>4</sup> Barth argues that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross reconciles God and humanity, and the event of the resurrection serves to confirm to humanity that the judgement was satisfactory to God. He posits that the resurrection is not necessary for the event of the cross to be effective in restoring the covenant. In Moltmann’s articulation of reconciliation the event of the cross is dependent upon the resurrection.

In chapter seven this thesis demonstrated that in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* the event of the cross calls forth a human response. Human fellowship with God is made possible by the event of the cross. This chapter explored the relationship between the cross and Christian ethics and the relationship between justification and sanctification in *Church Dogmatics* volume IV. A brief assessment of Barth’s doctrine of baptism indicated how Barth’s writings concerning baptism were intimately connected to his doctrines of God and election. According to Barth, the awakening of men and women to faith in the already accomplished work of Jesus Christ and the event of cross occurs solely through the Spirit (baptism with the Holy Spirit) and is an act of God alone. Baptism with water is the first act of faithfulness to God by men and women that occurs in the freedom given to humanity by the already accomplished act of reconciliation achieved in the event of the cross. This chapter argued that a proper understanding of Barth’s doctrine of baptism must acknowledge the significant influence of his doctrines of God, election and Christology.

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<sup>3</sup> IV/1, 296.

<sup>4</sup> Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*, 41.

Throughout the *Church Dogmatics* Karl Barth insists the event of the cross and the event of the resurrection should be considered as united but distinct events. For Barth, the cross and the resurrection are “two basic events of the one history of God with a sinful and corrupt world”<sup>5</sup> that reveal a gracious God who acts to judge human sin and restore the covenant. It is clear that Barth should not be labelled either as a “theologian of the cross” or as a “theologian of glory” according to Luther’s classification if it means that either the cross or resurrection have priority over the proclamation of the unity and distinction of both events. Alister McGrath states that:

To be a theologian of the cross is to recognise that we are simply not authorised to base responsible Christian discussion of God or ourselves upon anything other than the crucified and risen Christ, and to exult in and wonder at the astonishing and liberating understanding of God which results.<sup>6</sup>

Barth would surely agree with this statement. It is evident that throughout the *Church Dogmatics* there is significant engagement with and presentation of the event of the cross that illustrate his recognition of the importance of the cross for Christian theology. Barth’s writings on the event of the cross reveal the identity and love of the triune God to humanity, provide hope and an articulation of reconciliation, and elicit the response of obedience and witness.

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<sup>5</sup> IV/1, 310.

<sup>6</sup> Alister McGrath, *The Enigma of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 190.



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